

THE ISMAILIS AND KIRGHIZ OF THE UPPER AMU DARYA AND PAMIRS IN AFGHANISTAN: A MICRO-HISTORY OF DELINEATING INTERNATIONAL BORDERS

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School

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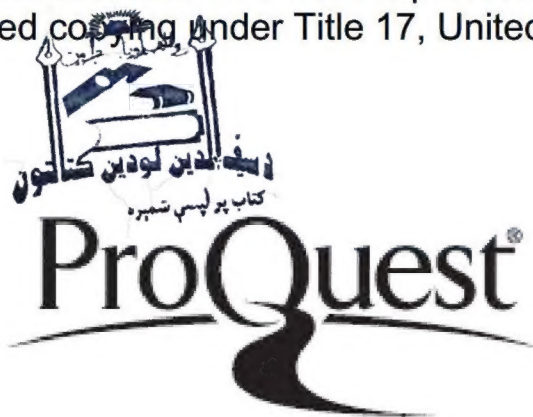


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THE ISMAILIS AND KIRGHIZ OF THE UPPER AMU DARYA AND PAMIRS IN AFGHANISTAN: A MICRO-HISTORY OF DELINEATING INTERNATIONAL BORDERS

This thesis investigates the Afghan occupation of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs and the effect that creating international borders in 1895 had on the Ismaili and Kirghiz communities of the region. Specific focus is placed on the degree that these new borders impacted trade, migration, and the standing of local political elites. The temporal scope of this paper is the eve of the imperialist division of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs in the mid-nineteenth century to the closure of Afghanistan's border with the Soviet Union and China in the 1940s.

Thematically and chronologically this study is divided into three parts. The first section focuses on the era before imperialist powers forced the division of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs. During this period, the region was of minor concern to officials in St. Petersburg and London, and local Ismaili and Kirghiz elites ruled with significant autonomy. The second section examines events from the 1870s to the 1890s that led up to the 1895 accord that divided the region between Russia and Afghanistan. The last section explores the repercussions that international borders had on Ismaili and Kirghiz communities and their impact on Afghanistan's relationship with the Soviet Union and China.

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Introduction

The districts of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs in the northeast corner of Badakhshan Province are some of the most remote areas in all of Afghanistan. The Ismaili and Kirghiz inhabitants of this region occupy the periphery of the Afghan political realm and share more linguistically and culturally with communities on the other side of the border in Tajikistan, China, and Pakistan than they do with their fellow Afghans. Historically the Ismailis on both banks of the Upper Amu Darya formed communities that were governed by common rulers, and the migration patterns of the Kirghiz carried them across the Pamirs into what is today Tajikistan and China. In the last quarter of nineteenth century, the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs were occupied by the Afghans, Russians, and Manchus, and in 1895 an international border was delineated that divided the Ismaili communities and the historic migratory range of the Kirghiz. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the Afghan occupation of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs and the effect that creating international borders had on the Ismaili and Kirghiz communities of the region. Special focus will be placed on the events that led up to the 1895 delineation of international borders and the degree that these new borders impacted trade, migration, and the standing of local political elites over the next half century.

The temporal scope of this paper is the eve of the imperialist division of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs in the mid-nineteenth century to the closure of Afghanistan's borders with the

minor concern to officials in St. Petersburg and London, and local Ismaili and Kirghiz elites ruled with significant autonomy. The ruling houses of the Shughni, Wakhi, and Zebaki, whose history can be traced back into the eighteenth century, balanced their allegiances between the regional powers of Kokand, Afghanistan, and the Qing. The history of the ruling houses will be investigated, including their tradition of buttressing their positions of powers by means of marital alliances. The history of Ismaili communities maintaining confessional ties through representatives of the Aga Khan will also be examined.

The second section focuses on the events leading up to the 1895 agreement that divided the Amu Darya and Pamirs between Russia and Afghanistan. The basis for the 1895 accord was the 1873 Granville-Gorchakov agreement between Russia and Britain that recognized their respective spheres of influence in Central Asia. This agreement designated the Amu Darya as the dividing line between Russian and Afghan territory, but it failed to designate the status of the tributaries of the Amu Darya. The flaws of the Granville-Gorchakov agreement were exposed over the next two decades. The 1873 agreement was written without concern for the Ismailis and Kirghiz who inhabited the contested lands so that, subsequently, the leaders of these communities were left to negotiate individually with neighboring powers that coveted their territory. In 1880, Abdur Rahman Khan became the Emir of Afghanistan and he aggressively enforced his territorial rights on the northern Afghan border, including the overthrow of the ruling houses of Shughnan, Wakhi, and Zebak in 1883. Over the next decade, the elite of Shughnan, Wakhan, and Zebak were decimated through a series of military conflicts with Kabul.

Little Pamir and the southernmost portion of the Great Pamir, thus creating a corridor that directly connected Afghan and Qing territory.

The last section of this thesis explores the repercussions of creating international borders in the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs over the half century following the 1895 agreement. The region proved to be an economic asset when Afghan opium displaced Indian and Soviet challengers in the markets of East Turkestan and China. Moreover, Kirghiz were able to migrate across international borders for several decades following the agreement until the Soviet Union and China closed them. At the same time Moscow and Beijing challenged Afghan sovereignty in the Great Pamir and Little Pamir. In the 1930s and 1940s, Soviet aggression took the form of military-raids on Kirghiz communities in the Afghan Pamirs, while Chinese officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to resurrect territorial claims over the Great Pamir and Little Pamir that had been abandoned by Qing officials a half century earlier.

One goal of this study is to bridge the geographic and linguistic gap that appears in scholarship with regard to research on the division of the Pamirs and Amu Darya River. There has been substantial scholarship on the history of the Ismailis and Kirghiz in Russian Central Asia, China, and Afghanistan, but few sources have investigated the history of the region taking into account all three countries. The use of Persian and Chinese-language sources in the present work helps to fill that gap. Due to the linguistic limitations of this author, the vast collection of Russian-language sources on this subject has been excluded, though their importance is

see the section on historical works on Badakhshan in Grevemeyer's introductory chapter.¹ English-language primary sources are mostly from travelogues and the vast Indian Office collection.

One drawback to the study of the Upper Amu Darya is the dearth of sources produced by native researchers. Many of the sources used in the present work are either works directly sponsored by regional governments or secondary works heavily reliant on primary sources produced for government. Important sources used in this study include the *Siraj al-tawarikh*, commissioned by the Emir of Afghanistan, and reports produced for the governments of British India and China. While the motives of the authors are apparent to historians, the degree that subjectivity and alteration of facts marred the accuracy of individual works is unclear, though it is certain to have occurred. In addition, many of the British agents and western Orientalists had little knowledge of local languages and histories and relied completely on translators and misinformed sources. For example, the work of Danish military officer Ole Olufsen is one of the few accounts of the Ismailis of the Upper Amu Darya in the late 1890s; it is a valuable source about the Russian administration at that time, but his commentary on the "Celtic" origins of the Ismailis and their Zoroastrian traditions is based on ignorance and should be wholly dismissed.² Other works produced by outsiders closely mirror what is found in native sources. Evidence of this was found by Christine Noelle, who noted that since British agents relied heavily on sources within the Afghan royal court, their reports on events in Afghanistan "do not display a strikingly

different perspective from native court historians like Faiz Muhammad.”³ There are some notable exceptions. *Tarikh-i Badakhshan* was most likely compiled, at least in part, by natives of Badakhshan, though the edition used in this book was published in the Soviet Union, where academic works were heavily censored. One of the few native scholars who has published on the history of the Ismailis in the region is Shirin Kurban, a Tajik from Sarikol in Xinjiang, though his work is confined geographically to events in Xinjiang and is thus of less relevance to this study. Another notable native informant is anthropologist Nazif Shahrani, a native of Badakhshan who lived among the Kirghiz and Wakhi in Afghanistan. German Hermann Kreutzmann also conducted extensive field work among the Wakhi of northern Pakistan. Unlike government agents and travelers who passed through the region in matter of days or weeks, Shahrani and Kreutzmann lived among their subjects for lengthy amounts of time and their work reflects the views of the Kirghiz and Wakhi.



Defining Terms and Geographic Boundaries

One barrier to researching the history of peoples who straddle the borders of several states is the reconciliation of competing historical narratives and various systems for classifying populations. National governments choose to embrace histories and ethnonyms that suit their political goals, without regards for any inconveniences this may cause scholarly researchers. The same is true of geographical delimitations. The name and extent of a particular mountain range or river may depend upon which side of the border you occupy. When mining the received texts of several distinct cultures for the purpose of weaving together an intelligible narrative, the lack of coherence in the definition of significant geographical land features can be burdensome, to say the least. For these reasons this section explains the justification for the use of descriptive terms and geographic boundaries used in the present work.

Today in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and China the inhabitants of the Upper Amu Darya and Sarikol are often referred to as Tajik, a term that also refers to speakers of Dari in Afghanistan and Tajik in Tajikistan. Traditionally these inhabitants were referred to by ethnonyms associated with their home region, e.g., Shughni, Wakhi, Sarikoli, etc. In the second half of the twentieth century, Soviet authorities in Tajikistan nurtured the creation of the new ethnonym “Pamiri” that encompasses all of the speakers of the eastern Iranian branch of languages known as the Pamiri languages, including Shughni, Wakhi, and Zebaki. By comparison, the classification of various peoples in Afghanistan was never as distinct as in the Soviet Union and China, and ethnic

group. In the case of the inhabitants of the Upper Amu Darya, the unifying element is their confessional background, i.e., they are Ismailis and followers of the Aga Khan. This paper will demonstrate that Ismailis, a minority among their Sunni neighbors, maintained communal cohesion across borders through the network of representatives of the Aga Khan. For the above stated reasons, the terms Ismaili and Kirghiz will be used here, with the full acknowledgement of the author that the former is a confessional marker, while the latter refers to language-based nationality or ethnicity.

Another subject that lacks universally recognized boundaries is geography. A glaring example of this is the use of the term “Pamirs,”⁴ a word used to describe the most formidable geographic feature in the region. The majority of the pamirs are located in what is today Tajikistan’s Kuhistoni Badakhshon Autonomous Province. The remaining pamirs are the Little Pamir and the southern portion of the Great Pamir, which constitutes the Afghan Pamirs, and the Taghdumbash Pamir, located in the People’s Republic of China. While the significance of the Pamirs as a physical barrier and a route for trade are universally acknowledged, the definition of “the Pamirs” and their scope varies widely. Kim Vanselow employs a strict interpretation of individual pamirs as “flat and wide high valleys with typical mountain meadows in altitudes around 3500 to 4000 [meters above sea level].”⁵ Other definitions refer to the entire region, including the individual pamirs and the surrounding communities, as the “the Pamirs.” This is

⁴ In this paper the plural capitalized “Pamirs” refers to the collective range that includes all of the pamirs, i.e., the geographic feature known as the “Pamir Mountains.” When pamir is employed

reflected in the work of nineteenth century Orientalist Gottlieb Leitner, who stated that “there are ... in one sense many ‘Pamirs,’ and as a *tout-ensemble*, one ‘Pamir,’ or geographically, *the* ‘Pamir.’”⁶ This all encompassing definition of the Pamirs was challenged by some observers, including some early visitors to the Pamirs. English Captain Henry Trotter, who in 1875 was one of the first Westerners to cross the Pamirs, noted that “the name Pamir has been inaccurately employed as a generic term covering the whole of the elevated mass lying between the Hindu Kush and the mountains of Khokand, yet it is rightly applied to some of the *steppes* which occupy a large portion of this region.”⁷ Because the present work is concerned with the history of individual pamirs, the term Pamir Mountains will not include areas located distinctly outside of any pamir, i.e., the Upper Amu Darya and Sarikol.

Another geographic feature with competing definitions is the Amu Darya. The river system is often referred to by the ancient appellation Oxus in western literature. It is fed by tributaries originating in the Pamirs, including the Pamir River that begins at the western end of Lake Zorkul on the border of present day Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The Pamir flows southwest and meets the Sarhad River, also called the Wakhan River, above Qalah-i-Panjah in Wakhan. After this point the river is known as the Panj River. At Ishkashim the water flows north and meets with the Ghunt and Shakhdarah rivers at Khorugh in Shughnan and the Bartang River at

⁶ G. W. Leitner. “Appendix I: Hunza, Nagyr and the Pamir Regions.” in *Dardistan in 1866, 1886*

Qalah-i-Wamar in Rushan.⁸ The river system then continues to flow more than 2,000 miles, eventually depositing its contents into the Aral Sea.

In the present work the Upper Amu Darya is significant for two reasons. Firstly, its banks are the home of several Ismaili populations, including the Shughni, Wakhi, Rushani, and Ishkashimi. The Amu Darya is the life source for these communities, which depend on the river for irrigation to sustain their subsistence farming practices. Secondly, in the 1890s Britain and Russia agreed that the Upper Amu Darya would serve as the border between Russian Central Asia and Afghanistan. The river system that had unified the Ismaili communities situated on its banks now severed these communities in two. The inhabitants of Shughnan, Rushan, Ishkashim, and Wakhan had to choose loyalties, the result of which was great upheaval as a large portion of the population on the left-bank fled the wrath of the Emir of Afghanistan for protection of the Czar's armed forces on the right bank. The Ismailis on the left and right banks continued to have close relations until the mid-1930s, when cross border traffic came to a virtual halt.

Chapter I

Pre-Imperial Era

In the middle of the nineteenth century the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs were on the periphery of larger states and empires. By the end of the century, the region would be divided and consumed by its larger neighbors. The political, economic, and social repercussions of the creation of international borders had a deep and long lasting impact. In order to understand the events of this later era, an examination of the pre-imperial time period is useful. This section will outline the pre-imperial political and economic landscape of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs. Focus will be placed on the history of the ruling houses of the Ismaili communities in Wakhan, Shughnan, and Zebak and the role that Ismaili pirs played in forming a cohesive confessional community across the dispersed Ismaili communities.

A. Demographics

Historically the largest population centers in the region only numbered in the low thousands. The daunting terrain meant communities lived in relative isolation and were separated by distances that would take days or weeks to traverse. Then, as now, the region was divided into two cultural spheres that were separated by confession, language, and settlement patterns. In the

sect of Islam. The Ismailis occupied the same valleys for generations and the history of the ruling houses of Shughnan and Wakhan can be traced back into the eighteenth century. In contrast, the Kirghiz of the Pamirs seasonally migrated and periodically uprooted their entire community; for this reason it is difficult to trace the historical roots of any single Kirghiz community found on a particular Pamir. The collective accounts of travelers' reports reveal that various Kirghiz communities at different times settled the Little Pamir and Great Pamir. During other periods these pamirs were completely devoid of inhabitants. What is known for certain is the population of the Ismailis and Kirghiz was relatively small, numbering in the tens of the thousands.

The extreme terrain and climate has meant that the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs have always been sparsely populated. The largest population was in Shughnan. British agent Thomas Edward Gordon, a Scottish officer attached to Thomas Douglas Forsyth's 1873-74 diplomatic mission to Yarkand, noted that Shughnan and Rushan, the largest communities on the Upper Amu Darya, together comprised 4,700 families, with around 1,500 homes alone in the Shughni capital, Barpanjah.⁹ Neighboring communities had populations of less than 2,000. The 1914 *Historical and political gazetteer of Afghanistan* reported that in Ishkashim "the population of the whole valley is probably about 1,200 souls." Neighboring Zebak was home to roughly 1,500 individuals.¹⁰ British Agent Ney Elias, who traveled through the region in 1885-86, estimated the population of the "Upper Oxus States and Zebak, about 14,000,"¹¹ while the *Historical and*

⁹ Thomas Edward Gordon. *The Roof of the World: Being a Narrative of a Journey over the High*

political gazetteer of Afghanistan estimated the population of the Afghan half of Wakhan, Shughnan, Rushan, Zebak, Ishkashem, and Gharan to be roughly 10,000 individuals.¹² As a result of frequent migration, population estimates of the Kirghiz of the Pamirs varied widely over time. Today the Pamirs are divided between three countries and the borders are closed to migration, but in the mid-nineteenth century the Kirghiz migrated across the Pamirs seasonally and during times of crisis. Precise estimates of the Kirghiz population for the region, but the number was likely in the low thousands. When English naval Lieutenant John Wood traveled to Wakhan in 1838, he encountered a community of 100 Kirghiz families near Khandud.¹³ Four decades later, when Henry Trotter visited the Great Pamir and Little Pamir, he noted both pamirs had been “thickly inhabited by Kirghiz in former years, but they are now unoccupied.”¹⁴ It is not known what the exact population of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs was in the mid-nineteenth century, but it is safe to say that it numbered in the low tens of thousands.

B. The Pamirs

The Pamirs were part of the range occupied by the Kirghiz that stretched from the northeast in East Turkestan to southwest where they about the Hindu Kush. Because of harsh climate and high elevations, the population of the Pamirs has always numbered in the low thousands. Canadian wildlife biologist Ronald Petocz, who conducted fieldwork in the Afghan Pamirs in the 1970s, noted that the Big and Little Pamirs were covered in snow for six or seven

months a year and “the overall severity of the climate, particularly in winter, makes the region one of the least hospitable in the country.”¹⁵ Throughout the nineteenth century, populations of pastoral Kirghiz migrated in and out of the Pamirs. One of the few historical physical structures on the Pamirs that can be traced to the Kirghiz is situated at Bozai Gumbaz on the Pamir River, where a cluster of domed tombs are the likely burial place for Kirghiz elite.¹⁶ Kirghiz were spread across the Pamirs, though the population on any particular pamir fluctuated due to migration.

In the early 1800s, control over the Pamirs was contested by two rival powers — Kokand in the Fergana Valley and the Qing Dynasty in China. Qing claims to the Pamirs were established during the 1758-59 expedition under Emperor Qianlong against the Khojas that brought Sarikol into the realm of Emperor Qianlong. In the years following the Qing conquest of East Turkestan the Kirghiz of the Pamirs and neighboring regions often preyed on traders between Kokand and the Altishahr, including a raid in 1760.¹⁷ In the 1820s, the Khan of Kokand expanded into the Pamirs and challenged the Qing as part of his effort to tax trade between Yarkand, Badakhshan, and Kashmir.¹⁸ By the 1830s the Khanate of Kokand was levying taxes on the Kirghiz of the Pamirs, and the Qing made no effort to prevent Kokand from annexing the Pamirs. In 1835, the Qing agreed to grant Kokand the right “to keep the Kirghiz in subjugation.” Furthermore, the agreement permitted Kokandi agents to tax Kirghiz traders operating in the Altishahr. The Khanate of Kokand also took control of Qarategin, situated just

west of the Pamirs, reinforcing Kokandi hegemony over Kirghiz in the region.¹⁹ Security did not improve until a Kokandi general named Yaqub Beg seized power in Kashgar in 1865 and established an emirate. Emir Yaqub Beg spent the next few years incorporating much of the territory once held by the Qing into his realm.²⁰ The stability that Yaqub Beg brought to the region permitted trade to rebound. Gordon noted that under Yaqub Beg the situation in the Pamirs was “one of peace and security” and merchants traversed trade paths “in small parties without molestation.”²¹

The pamirs situated closest to the Amu Darya usually came under the domain of Ismaili rulers. Elias noted during his travels in 1885-86 that the Kirghiz at Rangkul considered themselves to be “subjects of the rulers of Shighnan ... and their country a portion of the Roshan province.” He also found that Shughni and Kirghiz communities that lived in close proximity shared cultural ties. At a settlement called Palids, the inhabitants were mostly “Shighni and Persian-speaking Tajiks,” but due to their close interactions with neighboring Kirghiz “they nearly all know Turki as well.”²² The Kirghiz of Shughnan participated in raiding neighboring territory, including in the 1830s when Kirghiz tribes from Shughnan took part in raids on Sarikol and kidnapped Sarikoli women.²³ The Great Pamir and Little Pamir were recognized as part of the realm of the Mir of Wakhan, though these pamirs were devoid of any Kirghiz inhabitants for long periods of time.²⁴ Gordon noted that Wakhan “owns the Western Tagdumbash, from

¹⁹ Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank. *The Cambridge History of China. Late Ch'ing, 1800-*

the watershed, the Little, Great and Alichur Pamirs, and the Ak Tash valley to the west.” He also found that while the “Alichur belongs virtually to Wakhan,” the influence of the Mir of Wakhan was diluted by “the Kirghiz from Shignan” who were “in the habit of occupying it at will without question.”²⁵

C. The Upper Amu Darya

The history of the Mirs of Wakhan can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. The *Rahnama-yi Qaṭaghan va Badakhshan* mentions one Mir Jan Khan who ruled over Wakhan.²⁶ His son Muhammad Rahim Beg later became Mir. John Wood, who traveled to Wakhan in 1838, noted that in the early 1830s Badakhshi ruler Kokan Beg had invaded Wakhan and drove many Wakhis to seek refuge in neighboring Chitral. Muhammad Rahim Beg remained behind to defend his capital at Qalah-i-Panjah and through a ruse during negotiations he slew Kokan Beg. Later in 1838 the powerful Mir of Kunduz Murad Beg had the Wakhi Mir killed when he failed to offer adequate tribute.²⁷

After Muhammad Rahim Beg’s death his cousin became Mir, but he was overthrown a year later by Futteh Ali Shah — a younger brother of Muhammad Rahim Beg — who would go on to rule Wakhan for the next thirty-five years.²⁸ Decades later British agents encountered the

descendents of the refugees who fled Wakhan during this turbulent period. During his first mission to Yarkand in 1870 Thomas Douglas Forsyth met members of “a branch of the Wakhi tribe, who, as their name denotes, came originally from Wakhan” and settled near the Kilian Pass and Sanju Pass on the trail between Ladakh and Yarkand.²⁹ When Henry Walter Bellew, a member of Forsyth’s second mission to Kashgaria in 1873-74, passed near the Kilian Pass he encountered “fifty or sixty houses of the Wakhi” that had “came from Pamir and Wakhan originally, and are said to have been settled there since forty years ago.”³⁰ Under Futteh Ali Shah Wakhan continued to pay tribute to the Mirs of Badakhshan. The Mir of Wakhan also supported Yaqub Beg in his conquest of Kashgaria, including commanding a force of Wakhis during the siege of Kashgar in 1865. Futteh Ali Shah was an elderly man when he was visited by representatives of the British Mission to Yarkand in 1874. The British agents also met with the Mir’s twenty-five-year-old son, Ali Mardan Shah. Thomas Gordon described Ali Mardan as an active sportsman who hunted *Ovis polus* and ibex and had “fair hair and blue eyes.” When the Mir died in early 1875, Ali Mardan became the next Mir of Wakhan.³¹

Northwest of Wakhan lies Shughnan. According to the *Rahnama-yi Qataghan va Badakhshan* and *Siraj al-tawarikh* the rulers of Shughnan used the title *Mir*, while the title *Shah* is found in the *Tarikh-i Badakhshan*. The ruling house of Shughnan had a lineage that can be traced back into the eighteenth century. The *Rahnama-yi Qataghan va Badakhshan* states that Mir Shah Wanji, who ruled in the late eighteenth century, governed a territory stretching from

Badakhshan to Chitral. His throne passed to his son Qobad Khan³², whom Elias calls Kuliad Khan.³³ The *Tarikh-i-Badakhshan* reveals that after Qobad Khan's death his two sons, Abd al-Rahim Khan and Abd al-Aziz Khan, fought over who would succeed their father. This led to the intervention of the Mir of Badakhshan, Mir Shah, who came to power in the 1840s. Mir Shah placed Abd al-Aziz Khan in power in Shughnan, but later backed Abd al-Rahim, who overthrew and killed his brother.³⁴ He ruled Shughnan for 24 years in the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁵ The *Tarikh-i Badakhshan* and *Rahnama-yi Qaṭaghan va Badakhshan* do not shed any light on the religious background of the Shahs of Shughnan, but Elias wrote that "long afterwards the people became Shiahs, though the family of the Mirs remained Sunni till the last."³⁶

The *Rahnama-yi Qaṭaghan va Badakhshan* states that Abd al-Rahim had two sons, Sher Mohammad and Yusuf Ali Shah, while the *Tarikh-i Badakhshan* reveals a total of eight sons, including Muhabbat Khan and Yusuf Ali Khan, a variant appellation of the above mentioned Yusuf Ali Shah.³⁷ The *Tarikh-i Badakhshan* states that Muhabbat Khan and Yusuf Ali Khan colluded with their brother Amirbeg to overthrow their father Abd al-Rahim Khan. Yusuf Ali Khan then conspired with his father to overthrow Amirbeg.³⁸ Mir Jahandar Shah provided Muhabbat Khan the military means to challenge his father Abd al-Rahim Khan for control of

³² Kushkaki and Reut. p. 200.

³³ Elias, p. 47.

³⁴ I would like to thank Zohra Ismail and Daniel Beben for providing me with copies of several versions of the *Tarikh-i Badakhshan* and Zohra's invaluable translation of the first section of the

Shughnan. Muhabbat Khan lost, but a year later came back and defeated his father. He made Yusuf Ali Khan *hakim* of Rushan.³⁹ Elias noted that before the ouster of the Yusuf Ali Khan, the *hakim* of Rushan was usually a brother or close relative of the Shah.⁴⁰ Muhabbat Khan and Yusuf Ali Khan then had their brother Amirbeg and their father, the ex-Shah Abd al-Rahim Khan, killed. The brothers then ruled for five years before more fratricidal bloodletting broke out. Muhabbat Khan defeated his brother Yusuf Ali Khan in battle, and the latter only survived with the aid of the son of the Mir of Badakhshan. Muhabbat took revenge on subjects considered disloyal and slaughtered large numbers, which led to resentment of the populace. Yusuf Ali Khan had his brother poisoned, and with the backing of Mir Jahandar Shah of Badakhshan, he became the Shah of Shughnan.⁴¹ According to Gordon, Yusuf Ali Khan took power 1869, the year his brother died.⁴² Even after the death of his brother, Yusuf Ali Khan still had internal enemies to contend with. This included Nazar Shah Roshani and Said Faruq Shah, who the *Rahnama-yi Qataghan va Badakhshan* identified as a pir of the Shughni people.



The *Historical and political gazetteer of Afghanistan* claims that Shughnan “came within the sphere of Afghan domination with the rest of Badakhshan in 1859,” but sometime after that the Shahs of Shughnan regained their autonomy.⁴⁴ Yusuf Ali Khan came to power during the reign of Afghan Emir Sher Ali Khan, who ruled Afghanistan intermittently from 1863 to 1879. During the reign of Sher Ali Khan the last Mir of Badakhshan, Mir Mahmud Shah, was deposed and Badakhshan was placed under the administration of the Afghan governor of Turkestan,

Mohammad Alam Khan, who in turn appointed Sardar Hafizullah Khan Governor of Badakhshan.⁴⁵ Around 1872 or 1873, Mohammad Alam Khan summoned Yusuf Ali Khan to Badakhshan to submit allegiance to the Afghan Emir, however the Mir of Shughnan sent in his stead his son Mir Qobad, along with luxurious gifts of tribute, to meet the *naib*, or local administrator, at Mazar-i-Sharif.⁴⁶ Mir Qobad accepted on his father's behalf a robe of honor and a letter appointing Yusuf Ali Khan as head of the district of Shughnan.⁴⁷ Yusuf Ali Khan also reportedly solidified his relationship with Muhammad Alam Khan when his sister married the *naib*.⁴⁸ The rulers of Shughnan and Wakhan were also reportedly close with each other. Wakhi Mir Futteh Ali Shah told Gordon that the relations between Shughnan and Wakhan "are of the most friendly nature, and have been so for a long time." The Mir of Wakhan claimed to have visited Yusuf Ali Khan in Shughnan five times "during past years."⁴⁹ The rulers of Shughnan and Wakhi also both nurtured their ties with the Qing. In exchange for ensuring the safe passage of trade between Badakhshan and markets in Yarkand and Kashgar the Qing gave the Shah of Shighnan and the Mir of Wakhan a stipend in *yuanbao*, a Chinese silver and gold ingot currency. The Shah of Shughnan received the largest sum, ten *yuanbao*, while the Beg of Sarikol received

⁴⁵ Noelle, pp. 101, 320.

⁴⁶ Kushkaki and Reut, pp. 200-201.

⁴⁷ Reut stated that Yusuf Ali Khan was appointed to the position of "sous-préfet de Sheghnân", or subprefect of Shighnan. The original text states he was appointed to the "hakimat-i-Shighnan." Kushkaki and Reut, p. 201; Burhan al-Din Khan Kushkaki. *Rahnama-yi Qataghan va*

six, the Tham of Hunza four, and the Mir of Wakhan three.⁵⁰

Though local rulers were beholden to the greater powers that encompassed them, marital alliances permitted the Ismaili elites to balance their loyalties between neighbors. Daughters and sisters were wedded to the patriarchs and sons of neighboring ruling families in an effort to maintain peaceful relations. Often a local ruler would enjoy marital ties with several neighbors. According to Gordon, the sisters of Yusuf Ali Khan of Shughnan were married to Yaqub Beg in East Turkestan; Muhammad Alum Khan, the Afghan governor of Balk and Badakhshan; and Khodayar Khan of Kokand.⁵¹ Yusuf Ali also cemented his ties with the Mir of Badakhshan, Jahandar Shah when he married the Mir's daughter.⁵² Evidence of Yusuf Ali Khan's multiple loyalties were later found by the Afghan official who took Yusuf Ali Khan into custody after he was ousted from power in 1883. This Afghan official discovered among the Mir's possessions "documents to show that Yusuf Ali had been constantly in the habit of declaring himself a dependent ... of neighbouring rulers, including the rulers of Afghanistan, Bukhara, Kokand, and Kashgar."⁵³ In Wakhan Mir Futteh Ali Shah used marital alliances to maintain harmonious relations with the Mir of Hunza, Ghazan Khan. This was demonstrated by Futteh Ali Shah's marriage to the sister of Ghazan Khan, who in turn was married to Futteh Ali Shah's daughter. Futteh Ali Shah's son and successor Ali Mardan was a nephew of Ghazan Khan and often visited

⁵⁰ Leitner provides a different breakdown, converting *yuanbao* into pounds. According to Leitner £380 in total per annum was paid and of this Shughnan received £170, Wakhan £50, Sarikol

Hunza for long stays.⁵⁴

In addition to political alliances, the Ismailis throughout the region maintained religious ties. Confessional bonds between Ismailis in the region were woven by representatives of the Aga Khan, who was based in Bombay. Followers of the Aga Khan were found in the Upper Amu Darya, Sarikol, and Hunza, where Nizari Ismailism was reintroduced in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁵ The *Historical and political gazetteer of Afghanistan* included the inhabitants of Ishkashim and Munjan and Kuran among the followers of the Aga Khan.⁵⁶ The Ismaili communities in the region were led by hereditary pirs who represented the Aga Khan in the region and collected annual dues on his behalf. According to Gordon the Ismailis of Wakhan, Shughnan, Rushan, Chitral, Munjan, and Sanglich all sent ten percent of their produce to the Aga Khan annually.⁵⁷ These findings mirrored those of Mirza Shuja, who in 1871 reported that the Ismailis in Wakhan paid the Aga Khan “annually one-tenth of their income.”⁵⁸ Elias provided the names of four pirs who represented the Aga Khan in different geographic regions - Mirza Sharaf of Suchan for Ghund; Shahzada Hasan of Deh Rushan for Rushan and parts of Shughnan and Darwaz; Mizrab Shah, or the *Shah-i-Munjan*, for Darmarokht and Gharan; and Shah Abdur Rahim of Zebak.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Gordon, p. 138.

⁵⁵ Farhad Daftary. *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge: Cambridge

Of these pirs, Shah Abdur Rahim of Zebak was one of the most influential in the region. His followers were found throughout the Upper Amu Darya, Sarikol, Hunza, Badakhshan, and Yasin.⁶⁰ Shah Abdur Rahim ruled over Zebak⁶¹ and according to the *Historical and political gazetteer of Afghanistan* his followers extended as far as Cheltan, located on the Warduj river north of Zebak.⁶² Shah Abdur Rahim and his son Shahzada Lais appointed khalifa throughout villages in Hunza.⁶³ Contemporary western observers noted, and indeed embellished, Shah Abdur Rahim's regional influence. British agent John Biddulph, who was a member of Forsyth's second mission to Kashgaria in 1873-74 and was later stationed at Gilgit, claimed that Shah Abdur Rahim was "next in rank to the Agha Khan himself,"⁶⁴ while Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner exclaimed that "Shah Abdurrahim in Zeibak was (and perhaps still is) the greatest Pir in Central Asia."⁶⁵

There are conflicting accounts of the background of Shah Abdur Rahim. According to Trotter and Forsyth, Shah Abdur Rahim was said originally from Khorasan and he was placed in power by Muhammad Alum Khan, the Governor of Balkh, after the original ruler, Mir Haq Nazar, was overthrown by Afghan forces.⁶⁶ While Trotter's account would indicate Shah Abdur

⁶⁰ John Biddulph. *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1880. p. 119.

⁶¹ "A Secret Religion in the Hindukush [The Pamir Region] and in the Lebanon." *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record*. January-April 1893. Vol. V. No. 9-10. pp. 417-434.

⁶² Adamec. *Historical and Political Gazetteer*, p. 49.

⁶³ David L. R. Lorimer and Irmtraud Muller-Stellrecht. *Materialien zur Ethnographie von*

Rahim was not originally from the Upper Amu Darya or Badakhshan, David Lorimer claimed Shah Abdur Rahim's father was Yaqut Shah, an influential Ismaili pir who converted Mir Ghazanfar, Tham of Hunza, to Ismailism.⁶⁷ Yaqut Shah is identified elsewhere as being of Badakhshani origin.⁶⁸ There is also conflicting information regarding Mir Haq Nazar. Hyder Shah, a British Indian agent who passed through Zebak in 1870, noted that Mir Haq Nazar "has received his authority direct from the ruler of Faizabad,"⁶⁹ while the *Rahnumay-i Qataghan va Badakhshan* states that Mir Haq Nazar ruled under Afghan Emir Abdur Rahman Khan.⁷⁰ Moreover, Trotter found that there was unrest in the ruling house of Zebak. According to Trotter "several brothers" fought for the throne of Zebak in 1879, "more than one of whom was imprisoned by Mir Baba Khan of Badakhshan." One of these brothers, Said Sadik Shah, "was engaged in January and February 1879 in making raids upon the neighbouring territory of Wakhan."⁷¹ The *Rahnumay-i Qataghan va Badakhshan* also lists Said Sadiq Shah as the *hakim* of Zebak during the reign of Afghan Emir Sher Ali Khan.⁷² One biographic item that is certain is that Shah Abdur Rahim's son was Shahzada Lais and he would inherit his father's influence and lead the regional Ismaili community well into the twentieth century.

⁶⁷ Lorimer and Muller-Stellrecht, pp. 220, 461.

⁶⁸ Chahryar Adle. *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*. Vol. 5. Paris: UNESCO, 2003. p. 240.

Chapter II

Imperial Intrigue and the Creation of International Borders from the 1870s to the 1890s

In this section of the thesis the history of the occupation and division of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs by Afghanistan, Russia, and the Qing will be analyzed. In 1850 the Ismaili and Kirghiz elite of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs still exercised a significant degree of autonomy. At this time the region was seen in the eyes of the Russian and British governments as an afterthought and of little geopolitical significance. For both, however, the strategic value of the region increased following the Russian conquest of most of west Turkestan in the 1860s. In 1873 Russia and Britain agreed to recognize their respective spheres of influence in Central Asia and over the next two decades each aggressively asserted its claims in the region, the later doing so through the Emir of Afghanistan. During this period the local traditional Ismaili and Kirghiz elite were forced to choose allegiance among the Russians, Qing, and Afghans. The act that finally brought London and St. Petersburg back to the negotiating table to finalize a division of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs was the Russian occupation of much of the Pamirs in 1891. Russian control of areas claimed by Kabul and Beijing made a military conflict between the Czar's forces and those of the Manchus and Afghans seem increasingly likely, and in 1895 a border treaty was concluded between Russian and British negotiators that delineated the Afghan-

A. The Granville-Gorchakov Agreement

The history of the Upper Amu Darya and the Pamirs was linked closely to the fate of the larger regional powers in Central Asia. In 1850 Bukhara, Afghanistan, Khiva, and Kokand were independent regional hegemons and the Qing Dynasty had ruled over Eastern Turkestan for nearly a century. The following two decades witnessed a dramatic swing in power as Bukhara, Kokand, and Khiva were absorbed into the Russian Empire; Afghanistan fell within the British sphere of influence; and East Turkestan broke free of Qing rule. Within the context of these historical events, the Ismailis and Kirghiz of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs were insignificant and of little concern to the imperialist powers who were redrawing the political map of Central Asia. This would remain the case until the 1873 Granville-Gorchakov agreement that divided Central Asia into British and Russian spheres of influence.

The catalyst for increased imperial interest in the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs was the consolidation of Russian colonial possessions in Central Asia and British interference in Afghanistan. The first British survey of the region was conducted in 1838 by John Wood, who traveled through the Pamirs to Lake Zorkul. Wood's report remains one of the few early nineteenth-century sources for the region. Interest in surveying the region increased in the aftermath of the Anglo-Afghan War of 1838-1842, a conflict that had disastrous results for the British, including the destruction of an entire army at the hands of the Afghans. Two decades later the Czar's forces occupied most of the territory north of the Amu Darya. In 1864 the

Darya and Pamirs.

In 1873 London and St. Petersburg finalized what became known as the Granville-Gorchakov agreement, named after its lead negotiators. The treaty divided Central Asia into two spheres of influence dominated by co-signers. As part of the agreement London recognized the Russian annexation of Bukhara in exchange for St. Petersburg's acknowledgement that Afghanistan was a British protectorate. The agreement defined the Amu Darya and its tributary, the Panj, as the northern boundary of Afghanistan, with land on the right bank of this waterway designated Russian territory. In this agreement the Russian government accepted the British proposition that Badakhshan and Wakhan were the possessions of the Emir of Afghanistan and Lake Zorkul was the northeastern point of Afghanistan's boundary.⁷³

The flaws of the Granville-Gorchakov agreement were exposed over the ensuing decades. There was historical precedence going back to 1768 for the use of the Amu Darya to divide Afghanistan with its northern neighbors.⁷⁴ But in 1873 the origin and flow of the Amu Darya and its tributaries and the extent and number of pamirs was unknown to European and Russian cartographers. As a result, any disputed gap in territorial claims was interpreted as a potential threat by St. Petersburg and London and caused alarm in Beijing and Kabul. Indeed, Qing and Afghan officials looked on with caution in 1876 following the Russian overthrow of the Khan of Kokand and the annexation of his territory to the Fergana Province in Russian Turkestan. Russian officials later used the territorial claims they inherited from Kokand to explain Russian

concluded in 1880 with the accession of Emir Abdur Rahman Khan to power in Kabul, which marked the beginning of a period of aggressive enforcement of the Emir's territorial rights on his northern borders.

While in 1873 the concerns of the local rulers of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs were of little consequence for London and St. Petersburg, in the 1880s and 1890s local Ismaili and Kirghiz rulers played a significant role in shaping the outcome of events. The ambiguity of the 1873 agreement forced the leaders of the Ismaili and Kirghiz communities to negotiate individually with advancing powers that coveted their territory. One of the triggers that led to renewed negotiations between Britain and Russia was the Afghan ouster of the ruling houses of Shughnan, Wakhi, and Zebak in 1883 following a Russian mission to Shughnan. The Granville-Gorchakov agreement also excluded the interests of the Qing, who had been driven out of East Turkestan in 1865 and did not regain control of the region until the late 1870s. Moreover Russian encroachment into the region caused both the Qing and Afghan governments to take an aggressive stance in the Pamirs. The threat of conflict sparked by the actions of the Afghans or the Qing was one of the catalysts for London and St. Petersburg finalizing a border agreement in 1895.

1.1 Map of Major States Following 1895 Agreement to Divide Region



Map created by author.

B. The Afghan Government Consolidates Control



In 1878 the arrival of a Russian diplomatic mission in Kabul triggered the Second Anglo-Afghan War. The following year Afghan Emir Sher Ali Khan died and British occupying forces supported Abdur Rahman Khan's campaign to become the new Emir, a position he would hold until his death in 1901. For Emir Abdur Rahman Khan the province of Badakhshan was

strategically important for securing his northern flank from both foreign and domestic threats. In

Mohammad Khan, led the campaign to subjugate Badakhshan.⁷⁵ Decades later during his campaign to consolidate control of his new realm following the death of Emir Sher Ali Khan in 1879, Abdur Rahman Khan established a significant military presence in Badakhshan. Throughout the 1880s the Emir faced domestic rebellion, including in Badakhshan, which had been joined with Qataghan into a single administrative region within Afghan Turkestan. After his accession to power in 1880, the Emir instituted steps to consolidate the control of the central government over border provinces. This included *farmans*, or decrees, sent in 1882-83 to the governor of Qataghan and Badakhshan and the governors of other border provinces “to sketch and explain on a map the borders of the areas under their jurisdiction” so that “henceforth no dispute would arise between these provinces and foreign governments and for a very long time the emirs of Afghanistan would be secure from other’s meddling.”⁷⁶ In 1883 a general rebellion in Badakhshan, including in the Amu Darya Basin, led by Muhammad Umar Khan Badakhshi, elicited fears of Russian encroachment.⁷⁷ In response, the Emir dismantled the traditional political structure in the Upper Amu Darya and ousted from power the leaders of Shughnan, Wakhan, and Zebak.

⁷⁵ Fayz Muhammad Katib. *Kitab-i mustatab-i siraj al-tavarikh*. Vol. 2. Trans. R. D. McChesney. pp. 56-62. Found on pages 231-233 in original 1931 publication. Afghanistan Digital Library. Accessed at: Afghanistan Digital Library.

<<http://afghanistandl.nyu.edu/books/adl0009/index.html>> (accessed December 2009. File has since been removed from website). Manuscript will be published in paper format at future date.

⁷⁶ Fayz Muhammad Katib. *Kitab-i mustatab-i siraj al-tavarikh Siraj al-tavarikh*. Vol. III. Trans. R. D. McChesney and M. Mehdi Khorrami. Found on page 419 in original 1931 publication.

Initially the Shah of Shughnan professed subservience to the Emir. When Abdur Rahman Khan became Emir, he appointed Sardar Abdulla Khan Governor of Qataghan and Badakhshan and Yusuf Ali Khan sent the new governor tribute and a letter of obedience.⁷⁸ Yusuf Ali Khan remained in power for three more years until his overthrow in 1883 by Afghan forces. The Shah's ouster was ostensibly due to a Russian expedition that visited Shughnan in 1883. According to Russian sources, the Great Pamir Expedition of 1883, which mapped the political and geographic features of the region, was launched out of Russian concerns that the Afghan occupation of portions of Shughnan and Wakhan on the right bank of the Amu Darya was in violation of the 1873 Granville-Gorchakov agreement.⁷⁹ The *Siraj al-tawarikh* mentions a mission by "several Russians accompanied by a number of Bukharan Muslims" who entered Shughnan with the "intention of making pilgrimage to the sublime threshold of authority," i.e., the Emir in Kabul. This mission was rejected as the Afghan government suspected the putative goal of paying visit to the Emir was "was at odds with their secret desire which was gathering intelligence on the state of the government, the kingdom, and the subjects of Afghanistan."⁸⁰ The Russian expedition coincided with a rebellion across Badakhshan launched by Muhammad Umar Khan Badakhshi. The *Siraj al-tawarikh* notes that in the aftermath of the uprising "Shah Yusuf 'Ali Khan Shughnani" was one of several local elites who was sent "to Kabul in chains" along with his family for aiding the rebellion.⁸¹

Misgovernance and internal rebellion also played a part in the fall of Yusuf Ali Khan. The *Rahnama-yi Qataghan va Badakhshan* characterizes the Shah as an oppressive ruler who

invited intervention through his cruel acts of governance, including the enslavement of his own people. Darab Shah, a Shughni elite, was among those who petitioned Afghan Governor Sardar Abdulla Khan to intervene in Shughnan.⁸² In the *Tarikh-i-Badakhshan*, Darab Shah is characterized as a rebel leader who commanded one hundred men and controlled a swath of land stretching from the villages of Parshinif and Tim to Khorugh and Suchon.⁸³ The Afghan governor ordered Yusuf Ali Khan to go to Faizabad and uncovered correspondence that was allegedly passed between the Shughni Shah and Russian agents. With foresight, Yusuf Ali Khan sent his family to safety in the Bartang Valley, located on the edge of the Pamirs, in the hope that it would be less burdensome to escape any trouble he may encounter in Faizabad. At Faizabad Darab Shah testified against the abuse of power of Yusuf Ali Khan and Sardar Abdulla Khan threatened the Shah with death if he did not summon his entire family to return.⁸⁴ Finally, Yusuf Ali Khan surrendered Shughnan to Sardar Abdulla Khan and the Shah and his servants were arrested, placed in chains, and sent to Kabul.⁸⁵ On September 8, 1883, Yusuf Ali and one-hundred and thirty followers, including his son and family, arrived in the Afghan capital. According to the *Rahnama-yi Qataghan va Badakhshan* most of Yusuf Ali's entourage returned to Shughnan when Sardar Abdulla Khan sent word that they were free to leave Kabul without their Shah.⁸⁶

Yusuf Ali Khan was the last shah to ruler over Shughnan and his ouster marks the beginning of the period when Shughnan lost any form of independence and became a district of

Badakhshan. Sardar Abdulla Khan appointed an Afghan from Kandahar named Gulzar Khan to replace Yusuf Ali Khan.⁸⁷ Under Gulzar Khan the Shughni were heavily taxed, property was confiscated, and resentment against Afghan rule grew.⁸⁸ Some native officials survived the purges in Shughnan. While in Rushan Elias met the local *naib*, a man named Khuda Yar, “a native of Roshan.” Moreover, Elias noted that there were no Afghan troops stationed in Rushan. Afghan authorities collected tribute from the Kirghiz of the Pamirs, a tradition begun by the Mirs of Shughnan. Elias noted that previously “the Kirghiz, who lived beyond the left bank of the Murghabi, paid tribute to Shighnan,” but Afghan administrators now “demanded the customary tribute, which was paid as usual.”⁸⁹

Mir Ali Mardan Wakhan also did not survive the year 1883 in power. The *naib-i-hakumat* (vice-governor) of Badakhshan summoned Ali Mardan to Khanabad where he was compelled to profess his loyalty and submit to the Emir of Afghanistan.⁹⁰ Ali Mardan Khan revealed his true feelings after the meeting when he, along with his family and about one quarter of the 6,000 Wakhi, fled into exile.⁹¹ There are contrasting accounts of Ali Mardan’s activities following his fall from power. One version states that he led his Wakhi followers into Chitral, where he was warmly received by Amanul Mulk, the Mehtar of Chitral and Ali Mardan’s brother-in-law.⁹² George Cockerill backs up this account, stating that in November 1893 he met Ali Mardan in Chitral at Imit, near Ishkoman, “where, since he fled from the Afghans ten years

⁸⁷ Zadeh, pp. 141-43; Elias, p. 37.

⁸⁸ Zadeh, pp. 141-43.

before, he had made his home.”⁹³ In contrast, the *Siraj al-tawarikh* claims that Ali Mardan decided to join the Russians and “fled to Trans-Oxiana in rebellion.”⁹⁴

Ali Mardan was replaced with a new Afghan *hakim*, or governor, appointed by Kabul. In his memoir Emir Abdur Rahman Khan wrote that in 1883 “I appointed my own governor, named Ghafar Khan Kirghiz as governor of Wakhan, instead of Ali Merdan, the native chief of Wakhan.”⁹⁵ Ghafar Khan’s grandfather had settled in Afghanistan and his name indicates he was Kirghiz. When Ghafar Khan assumed his position, much of the population of Wakhan had already fled to Chitral, Hunza, and Sarikol. Ghafur Khan was able to convince a sizable portion of the exiled Wakhis to return to their homes. British Agent Colonel William Lockhart, who met the governor while traveling through the region in 1886, stated that Ghafar Khan largely succeeded in coaxing the Wakhi to return home.⁹⁶ Qalah-i-Panjah remained the main administrative center of Wakhan and residency of the Afghan Hakim of Wakhan, though later it would move to Khandud. In addition, the four administrative *sad* that had been in place under the *mirs* of Wakhan were retained: Sad-i-Sipanjah, Sad-i-Khandud, Sad-i-Ishtragh, and Sad-i-Sarhad.⁹⁷



Shah Abdur Rahim of Zebak, one of the most influential Ismaili pirs in Central Asia, was also forced into exile in 1883. Shah Abdur Rahim fled to Chitral after the arrest of his brother,

⁹³ George Cockerill. “Pioneer Exploration in Hunza and Chitral.” *The Himalayan Journal*. Vol.

Mohammed Sadik Shah, who was later imprisoned at Kabul.⁹⁸ Later the mantle of leadership among the Zebaki Ismaili elite in Chitral passed to Shah Abdur Rahim's son Shahzada Lais, who maintained his family's influence among the Ismailis of the Amu Darya basin well into the twentieth century. In Zebak, Shah Abdur Rahim was replaced by an Afghan *hakim* who also administered the predominantly Ismaili regions of Munjan and Kuran, located south of Zebak. These latter two regions were directly administered by a *naib-hakim* situated at the village of Shahran. In addition, the sparsely populated district of Gharan, home to mostly Shughni speakers and formerly part of Shughnan, was placed under the administration of the Hakim of Zebak.⁹⁹ Elias noted that included among the 2,750 inhabitants living within the realm of the Hakim of Zebak were twenty families of Kirghiz.¹⁰⁰

A primary motivation of the Emir for removing the traditional Ismaili leaders along the Amu Darya was growing concern of Russian encroachment from the north. In August 1884 the governors in northern Afghan provinces were issued a "set of instructions" for the demarcation of Afghanistan's northern border in order to retain "any land which the Russians lay claim to." The instructions warned that "the people of Afghanistan must not abandon or relinquish even one clump of ground or one spot of it because a clump of soil will become a parcel and a parcel an entire place and a spot will become a path and a path a highway." These fears came to fruition in 1885 when a dispute over the Afghan-administered Panj district, located in the northwest of Afghanistan, resulted in a brief war and defeat of Afghan forces at the hands of the Russians. The loss of the Panj District was one of the reasons the Afghan government adopted a policy of

on the Oxus River crossings ... so that sheep, cows, horses, camels, and other commercial goods would not be taken from Turkistan, Qataghan, and Badakhshan for sale in Russia.”¹⁰¹

Restrictions on trade with Russian territory would last until the end of the century.

Fears of an invasion from the right bank of the Amu Darya were realized when Ishaq Khan, the Emir’s cousin and the Governor of Afghan Turkestan, led a Russian-backed uprising in the north of the country. According to the *Siraj al-tawarikh* the “sons of mirs of Qataghan and Badakhshan” who had fled to Russian controlled “Trans-Oxiana” returned from exile to participate in the 1888-89 rebellion.¹⁰² Among the rebels was the former Mir of Wakhan, Ali Mardan, who crossed from Russian territory into Wakhan with a small group of followers.¹⁰³ Bronislav Grombchevsky, a Polish officer in the Russian military who collected intelligence in the region during the rebellion, claimed that he received a letter from the Mir in October 1888 in which Ali Mardan professed “a sincere desire to serve Russia.”¹⁰⁴ The Mir’s return to power was ultimately short-lived and forces loyal to Kabul, led by Naib Ashur Khan Wakhani, chased Ali Mardan and his followers over the border into Chitral.¹⁰⁵ This account is supported by Algernon Durand, the British agent at Gilgit from 1889-94, who wrote that the “old princes of Wakhan” had been summoned by Ishaq Khan and reinstated in power in Wakhan.¹⁰⁶

In September 1888 the forces of Ishaq Khan were defeated and momentary stability

¹⁰¹ Fayz Muhammad. Vol. III. Found on pages 434, 593 in original 1931 publication

¹⁰² Fayz Muhammad. Vol. III. Found on page 620 in original 1931 publication.

returned to the country. The following February the central government in Kabul issued a *farman* to regional leaders in Badakhshan — including the elders of Ishkashim, Wakhan, and Zebak — summoning them to Kabul to appear before the court to “identify the good and evil of the people of Badakhshan.” Furthermore, Kabul appointed loyal Pashtuns in administrative positions, including Emir Muhammad Khan of the Musa Khayl tribe as governor of Ishkashim.¹⁰⁷ Despite these measures Badakhshan again erupted in rebellion in the summer of 1889. The second phase of the rebellion revealed a split of loyalties in the region, as Shughni support for the rebellion contrasted with the affinity that Wakhi elites demonstrated to the Emir. This division was exemplified by Grombchevsky’s claim that the governor of Shughnan, Said Akbar Shah, joined the rebellion and recognized Russian rule.¹⁰⁸ Another leader of the rebellion was Arbab Sahib Nazar Shughni.¹⁰⁹ Grombchevsky described Sahib Nazar as a “famous Pamir brigand” who counted among his exploits the massacre of a caravan traveling from Badakhshan to Kashgar and the theft of a thousand head of cattle during a raid of the Russian-controlled Great Alai.¹¹⁰ Many Shughni rebels felt uncertain of the outcome of the uprising and sent their “their wives and children to Ghand and Bartang” to seek refuge.¹¹¹

In Wakhan six *arbabs*, who had paid homage “to the justice-based throne” and received from the Emir “gifts of robes of honor,” allied themselves with Kabul. According to the *Siraj al-tawarikh* the “people of Wakhan ... were enemies of the people of Shughnan and were serving the... government.” During the rebellion insurgents inflicted notable government casualties,

including the death of the Governor of Wakhan, Haqq Dad Khan, and the capture of the Governor of Zebak, Fath Muhammad Khan.¹¹² The *Rahnama-yi Qaṭaghan va Badakhshan* states that the leader of the Shugnni rebels was Said Akbar, the nephew of the ex-Shah of Shughnan, Yusuf Ali. Said Akbar confiscated grains and property and placed his brother, Timur Shah, in charge of a force that captured Zebak and Governor Fath Muhammad Khan. The governor of Zebak was then sent to Russian-held Darwaz, but he promptly returned to Kabul.¹¹³ The *Tarikh-i Badakhshan* provides a more in-depth narrative of the rebellion and claims that Timur Shah and another brother of Said Akbar, Mansur Khan, captured and brutally executed a pair of the Emir's representatives named Hojah Nazar and Qul Muhammad Bek.¹¹⁴ Rebels also captured a member of the Emir's *ghulam bachchas*, who was also the son of the Afghan commander at Wakhan, and sent him to "a Khitay (Chinese) border guard." The Qing border official refused custody of the young man and "sent him on to his father in Wakhan," along with a Kirghiz escort. By mid-July Shughnan had been re-occupied by Afghan government forces with the aid for the *arbab* of Wakhan and the remaining rebel forces fled to Russian-controlled Darwaz. The *Siraj al-tawarikh* claims that Afghan commanders negotiated with the refugees from Rushan, Shakhdarah and Bartang and "won them over and returned them to their homes."¹¹⁵

According to Grombchevsky, in the aftermath of the fighting 2,000 Shughni families fled to the Pamirs and Sarikol, only to be chased back by Qing authorities and fall into the hands of Afghan troops who "treated them with terrible cruelty." Grombchevsky claimed that when he trekked across the Pamirs for three days he personally saw dead and wounded Shughni strewn

across the Pamirs.¹¹⁶ Grombchevsky's account is supported by his British counterpart Francis Younghusband, who visited Sarikol in 1891 and reported that "this year many fugitives from Shignan had been driven here by the Afghans, but most of them had been sent back by the Chinese."¹¹⁷ Those who remained in Shughnan also suffered horrific retributions by Afghan forces. According to Grombchevsky villages that were suspected of supporting rebellious Shughni governor Said Akbar Shah were burned and their fields trampled by horses. Six-hundred male youths from the families of the Shughni elite were taken to Kabul for education and women and girls were abducted and sent to the Emir or "given to the troops as wives and concubines."¹¹⁸

While the Emir was facing rebellion on the Upper Amu Darya, the *Siraj-ul-Tawarikh* reveals that the Afghan government courted the Kirghiz of the Pamirs as potential allies in their contest with the Russians and Qing for control over the Pamirs. During the winter of 1891-92, the Emir noted that Afghan officials had "consulted a good deal with some experienced Qirghiz and Khuqandis who are here in Kabul." This was done with the hope that the Kirghiz could establish "that Sarmah Tash is part of the territory of Afghanistan." The Emir also reported that "a number of Kirghiz tribal leaders residing this side of the Murghabi River wrote a covenant expressing obedience and allegiance" and that "with heart and soul they accept obedience to the padishah of Islam." Many of these Kirghiz were subjects of the Qing who "were turning their faces from the government of China and seeking allegiance to this government." The Emir offered the Kirghiz supplies in exchange for a visit to Kabul "to kiss the sublime threshold of authority" and agreeing to do "whatever His Majesty commanded of them." The Emir reported

the Kirghiz turned down his offer out of fear of “investigations by Russian officials.”¹¹⁹ To further Afghan claims to the Pamirs, the government of Afghanistan in 1892 issued a map of the Pamirs showing territory claimed by the Emir.¹²⁰

The Afghan government also further consolidated its administrative control over Badakhshan and the Amu Darya basin. In 1890 the central government issued a proclamation separating Badakhshan and Qataghan from Afghan Turkestan. Administration of the new province was transferred from Balkh to the Northern Bureau in Kabul. A new road was also ordered constructed to provide “a shorter route for people of those two districts going and back forth to Kabul.” The central government in Kabul replaced the decimated leadership in the province, including the appointment of Ghulam Rasul Khan Payaru Khayl, who had been stationed in Mazar-i-Sharif, as the governor of Wakhan. One strategy the Afghan government employed for pacifying rebellious populations was the transfer of “ill-wishers of the government” from southern Pashtun-dominated provinces in the south to colonies in northern provinces. Among those forced to migrate were twenty-seven households of “evildoers,” totaling 164 individuals, from “the Ashpi Tikab people and the tribe of Husayn Khayl” in Sarubi who were sent to live in Taluqan and Wakhan.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Fayz Muhammad. Vol. III. Found on pages 742-43 in original 1931 publication.

C. The Qing Occupation of the Pamirs

In 1876 the Russian military overthrew the Khan of Kokand, who had long dominated the Pamirs, and annexed his territory into Russian Turkestan. The following year Yaqub Beg died and the Manchus routed his army, permitting the Qing to reassert their authority in East Turkestan. These two events created a political vacuum within the Pamirs that drew the interest of Qing, Russia and Afghan officials. By the early 1880s the Qing had established an administrative presence across most of the Pamirs, but in the early 1890s Afghan and Russian incursions would push the Qing out of the western Pamirs. This left the local Kirghiz and Ismaili elite to renegotiate their ties to neighboring hegemons. The nomadic Kirghiz of the Pamirs were in the advantageous position of being able to migrate between territories as borders were redrawn and the influence of the Qing, Russians, and Afghans fluctuated. Kirghiz elite of the Rang-Kul Pamir and Alichur Pamir had given their allegiance to the Manchus in the 1880s, but by the end of the century they had traded loyalties and migrated in and out of Qing territory several times.

In 1884 the Qing established the province of Xinjiang in East Turkestan. The creation of Xinjiang Province was more than a mere renaming of East Turkestan and included the creation of new districts and administrative positions. As part of the reorganization of the province new prefectures and counties were created.¹²² The Qing also reestablished their tributary relationship with neighboring territories, including Hunza. Hunza was ruled by a Mir and is often referred to as “Kanjut” in nearly all contemporary English, Russian, and Chinese sources. Elias claimed that

state with Chinese territory.” And in 1885 a Qing official traveled to the Sarikol-Hunza frontier to mediate a dispute. Elias said when he visited Yarkand the “Chinese authorities regarded Hunza as an outlying district of the New Dominion [or Xinjiang].”¹²³ Qing claims on the tributary state of Hunza continued even after Hunza became a British protectorate in 1892. The *Pami’er fenjie siyi* claimed that “While the northern part of Kanjut (坎巨提/ Kǎnjùtí), is shared by China, England, and Russia, there is no doubt that Kanjut belongs to China.”¹²⁴ The Qing were able to maintain their claims on Hunza because the Mir of Hunza resumed payment of an annual tribute in gold to Qing officials of one *liang* (两) and five *qian* (錢). In exchange the Qing permitted the Mir of Hunza to collect taxes in his historical claims in the Taghdumbash. The Qing authorities of the 1880s and 1890s were puzzled by the various toponyms that appeared on historical maps and the complications this caused for making claims on the Pamirs. This was evinced in the 1897 publication *Pami’er jilue*, when the author wrote that “Kachute (喀楚特) in Hu Weizhong’s Unification map should be Kanjuti (坎巨提), but Kachute (喀楚特) on the unification map is Ganzhute (乾竺特) on the waterway map.” In addition to these three different variations of Kanjut, Qing sources connected claims to Kanjut with territorial claims dating from “Pankeju (盤可據) was a small tribe in an ancient land that belonged to China.” The author warned that according to British Indian maps “Kanjut and Mount Muztagata are all outside of Chinese border” and it probably will not be long before the Russians from the North and British from the south invade.¹²⁵ The general confusion over historical claims on the part of

Qing officials extended to other territories, including in the Pamirs, and it had ramifications decades later for Guomingdang officials who attempted to expand China's borders.

The return of the Manchus to East Turkestan marked beginning of a more assertive Qing policy in the western Pamirs. The Qing entered the Pamirs in 1879 to quell a rebellion by Yaquub Beg's supporters and Manchu officials later established an administrative presence in the Pamirs. In 1883 a detachment of Qing troops confronted a group of Russian military personnel surveying land near Lake Rangkul. The Qing commander admonished the Russian officer in charge for not first seeking permission of Qing officials in Kashgaria. In 1884 Beijing and St. Petersburg signed an agreement to delimitate the boundary between Semirechenski and Fergana regions and Qing-controlled Kashgaria. This agreement covered the area of the western Pamirs. The language of the 1884 Russo-Qing agreement is ambiguous and the delineation of boundaries follows neither natural geographic features nor historical precedent. The focal point of the agreement was the Uz Bel Pass, situated northwest of Lake Rangkul. The Qing border was to follow a line directly south of the Uz Bel Pass, while the Russian border ran southwest of the Uz Bel Pass. This left a large swath of territory from Shughnan to just east of Lake Zorkul as undefined territory.¹²⁶ The ambiguity of the agreement resulted in more than a century of territorial disputes between the Qing and Imperial Russia and later Chinese and Soviet government. It also granted St. Petersburg the legal justification for ousting the Qing from the western Pamirs in the early 1890s, but in the 1880s it was the Qing who extended their administration deep into the western Pamirs.

By the early 1880s the Qing established themselves among the Kirghiz of the Pamirs. British agent Ney Elias reported during his 1885-86 travels through the region that east of the Sarikol Range at Karakul the Kirghiz appeared to be “well content to be under Chinese rule” as the seemingly indifferent Qing officials left the tribes “almost entirely to themselves.” In contrast, the Kirghiz further west at Rang Kul demonstrated “a distinct leaning towards the Afghans.” Elias was also told that the Kirghiz had sent a delegation to the Afghan Governor of Badakhshan to inquire about pledging loyalty to Kabul. The leader of the local Kirghiz, Kurmushi Beg, told Elias that he carried “a small tribute to Kashgar about once a year.” After the 1883 Russian expedition to the Pamirs, Kurmushi Beg claimed Rangkul was visited by a Qing official who “looted the Kirghiz of Rang Kul of all the property he could conveniently carry away.” At the time of Elias’ visit to the Pamirs, the division of Afghan and Qing territory was “the Murghabi from Aktash downwards, which was considered by all the people in this region, including the Afghans, to be the frontier between Chinese territory and the provinces of Shighnan and Wakhan.” This dividing line left most of the Pamirs within the territorial claims of Kabul and Beijing and outside of Russian control. Strained Qing-Afghan relations on the Pamirs caused problems for the Kirghiz and Elias reported meeting “a deputation of several Kirghiz” from the Murghab River Valley who had formerly lived in Alichur and complained how they were prevented by Chinese authorities from traveling to Shughnan to trade.¹²⁷

British agents who traveled through Qing territory in the mid-1890s interviewed Kirghiz who had served under the Qing in the western Pamirs and from their accounts it is possible to

east of the Sarikol Mountain Range, which became the de facto border between Russia and the Qing following Russian occupation of the western Pamirs in 1891-92. Due to its close proximity the Taghdumbash was the easiest pamir for the Qing to administer and station military personnel. West of the Sarikol Range the Qing established three begships located on the Aktash Pamir, Rangkul Pamir, and Alichur Pamir. Each pamir was under the administration of a Kirghiz Beg who received a hat-button of the sixth rank from the Qing *daotai* at Kashgar. In 1891 the begs of the in the Qing western Pamirs were Kasim Beg at Aktash, Kurumshi Beg at Rangkul and Tokur Beg at Alichur. Kasim Beg was in his early thirties in 1888 when he was appointed Beg of Aktash “by a Chinese military officer name Chang Hung-shou.”¹²⁸ British Captain Hamilton Bower, who visited the Taghdumbash in 1889, reported that Kasim Beg had been nominated by the Qing to replace his father, Ablasum Beg of Sarikol.¹²⁹ There was also the position of *yuzbashi*, or commanders of one-hundred men, at Aktash. In 1891 the *yuzbashi* of Aktash was Assrundi, a Kirghiz in his early forties who had received appointment by the *daotai* of Kashgar. The Qing established karawal, or frontier posts, in the western Pamirs that were manned by Kirghiz and demarcated the Qing border with the territory the Afghans claimed in the Pamirs. In Aktash there was a karawal at Isligh, established by Kasim Beg’s predecessor Tokhta Muhammad, and one at the settlement of Aktash that was “constructed in 1891 by a Chinese officer, known as Li Kuen-men, but destroyed by the Russians two months after its completion;”

¹²⁸ “Evidence, Regarding the Previous and the Actual Limits of Chinese Jurisdiction in the

and at Kizil Robat Kasim Beg had founded a serai, or caravan station.¹³⁰

Yuzbashi Assrundi reported that the Afghan-Qing border met at Sumtash and “the whole of the Small Pamir was Chinese,” while the land “south of the ridge separating the waters of the Aksu from those of the Wakhan river belonged to Afghanistan, and the Chinese never had any jurisdiction over it.”¹³¹ In September 1895 Major-General Montagu G. Gerard reported “that up to quite recently the Little Pamir was Chinese.” As for the Taghdumbash Pamir, Gerard met a group of Kirghiz led by Kasim Beg who confirmed that “this was, and always had been, Chinese territory.”¹³² Kasim Beg went further and stated that “the whole Taghdumbash Pamir up to the Wakhijuri is Chinese, who and the Beg alone receive taxes.”¹³³ British Agent George Macartney reported that in autumn of 1892 “a Chinese gentleman, named Hai Ying” traveled to the Pamirs and found that Qing claims extended “on the Murghab River ... as far as Tashkurghan, on the Alichur Pamir to the western border of the Yashilkul Lake, and on the Great Pamir to the western border of Lake Victoria¹³⁴, and on the Small Pamir to Bozai Gumbaz.”¹³⁵ Macartney later questioned Qing claims, stating that “it should be remarked that the Chinese have never had a properly defined boundary on the Pamirs.” Macartney described the limits of Qing rule as extending “westwards on the Alichur Pamir to Sumatash and on the Great Pamir to the eastern

¹³⁰ “Evidence, Regarding the Previous and the Actual Limits of Chinese Jurisdiction in the Region of the Pamirs.” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1507. pp. 302-303.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² “Enclosure No. 37. No. 254, Dated Mihmanguli, the 9th September 1895. From Major-General M. G. Gerard, C.B. to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.”

end of the Victoria Lake,” but he qualified Qing jurisdiction in the Pamirs, stating that “the Kirghis living in the Upper Oxus Basin ... and about Rangkul and Murghabi, owned a sort of loose allegiance to China not however as Chinese subjects, but rather as inhabitants of a State tributary to China.”¹³⁶

Qing administration in the Pamirs collapsed in the face of Russian advances in the early 1890s. The 1922 official Afghan history of Badakhshan records that the “Chinese who lived at Aktash were attacked” and then “fled without making war.” The Russians demolished the Qing position at Aktash and built a military post at Kizil Robot. This same official Afghan publication stated that the Pamirs had historically belonged to “the government of Khitay, which means the Sultanate of China,” despite the fact that the Afghan government in the 1880s and 1890s asserted their claims in the Pamirs.¹³⁷ Following the Russian occupation of the western Pamirs in 1891-92 the local Kirghiz gave their allegiance to their Russian overseers, but within a few years a sizable number of Kirghiz fled east and settled in territory still under Qing control. Kasim Beg had served under the Russians, “but having destroyed a boundary pillar set up by Colonel Janoff, he has now completely separated himself from Russian interests” and migrated to the Taghdumbash. According to Macartney Qing authorities had favorable policies towards the Kirghiz and there was “no doubt whatever that Kasim Beg and his clan recognise Chinese authority, and that the Taghdumbash Pamir is in the actual possession and occupation of the Chinese subjects at the

¹³⁶ “Memo on Article 3 of the Anglo-Russian Agreement” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1507. pp. 27-28.

¹³⁷ In her translation of Kushkaki’s work Marguerite Reut translated “حکومت ختای یعنی سلطنت چین”

present time.”¹³⁸ Kasim Beg and Yuzbashi Assrundi led their followers from Aktash to the Taghdumbash Pamir. The Qing rewarded the loyalty of Kirghiz migrants with official appointments. Assrundi, the Yuzbashi at Aktash, was appointed the Yuzbashi at Payik and Kasim Beg became the Beg of Taghdumbash, a position designated by a fifth rank button *dingdai* (顶戴) hat provided by the Qing Governor of Xinjiang. Another community of refugees who settled on the Taghdumbash in the 1890s was the Wakhi at Dubdar, also known as Dafdar. The colony of thirty-two Wakhi families, who were described in British Indian records as “fugitives from Wakhan” in Afghanistan, was founded in 1894. They were provided with land, cattle and agricultural tools by the Qing commander at Tashkurgan. The Wakhi colonists lived under the begship of Sirbuland Ali Shah.¹³⁹

D. Delineating Borders and Creating the Afghan Pamirs

Imperial intrigue in the Pamirs reached its height in the 1890s. In 1891 the Russian military established a post in the Pamirs named Shah Jan, which two years later was renamed Pamirski Post and eventually grew into the town Murghab. The Russian Pamirs were placed under the Turkestan General Governorate. The Russian military used this base in the Pamirs, which was under the command of the Turkestan General Governorate,¹⁴⁰ to challenge Afghan and Qing territorial claims. But the degree that Kirghiz, let alone Russian or Chinese soldiers, occupied the Pamirs in the nineteenth century has been called into question. Nazif Shahrani, who conducted extensive field work in the Afghan Pamirs, concluded that “given the severity of the climate, I am confident that in earlier periods the Pamirs were frequented only during the warmer seasons, and that although a short-term, year-round habitation of the Pamirs by small groups seeking sanctuary from their enemies during the earlier period might have occurred, permanent habitation came about only during [the twentieth century].” Shahrani goes on to note that his Kirghiz informants believed that a small number of Kirghiz households only began to use “the area of the Little Pamir on a regular basis for summer pasturage” in the late nineteenth century.¹⁴¹ Russian, Chinese, and Afghan soldiers were certainly less adapted to the winter climate on the Pamirs and therefore any military posts on the Pamirs were almost certainly occupied only during the warmer summer months.

In the winter of 1891 the Viceroy of India inquired with the Emir of Afghanistan about an

the district of Wakhan, Badakhshan crossed the river which flows towards Chitral [Chitral] and then withdrew.” The British warned that the Russian objective of this action “was to annex the Pamir ... region and bring it under their control.” The alarmed Emir expressed a desire “to ascertain and resolve the parts of Badakhshan, Wakhan, and Shughnan and the dependencies of those which belonged to Afghanistan and where part of the Pamirs also belong to Afghanistan so that the Russians would stop invading places inside the kingdom of Afghanistan.” He also claimed that the Russian aggression was “just a consequence of that negligence on the part of British officials in demarcating the border.”¹⁴² In May 1892 Afghan forces enforced the Emir’s claims in the Pamirs. That month a small Afghan military detachment crossed from Shughnan into a section of the Pamirs claimed by Russia and seized livestock and supplies from local Kirghiz. In addition, Afghan troops forcibly relocated some Kirghiz families to Shughnan.¹⁴³ By “seizing sheep from the Kirghiz as tribute,”¹⁴⁴ Afghan authorities were demonstrating governance over the Pamirs.

The *Siraj-ul-tawarikh* reveals that in May 1892 Afghan and Qing detachments met on the Pamirs “at Saman, better known as Samah, on the border of Badakhshan” to confirm their respective borders. Afghan officials, including Afghan governor of Shughnan and Wakhan, Ubayd Allah Khan, met with a Qing officer who confirmed that “this side of the Aq Tash Mountain along with the Murghabi River belongs to Afghanistan and what lies beyond those two places belongs to China.” There are conflicting accounts of the size of this Qing force. The *Siraj-*

ul-tawarikh states that the Qing official was “a Chinese officer with 100 regular soldiers and supplies,”¹⁴⁵ while British agent Charles Adolphus Murray, the Earl of Dunmore, who traveled through the Pamirs during this time, claimed that “there has not been a single Chinese soldier on the Pamirs during the year 1892, except a non-commissioned officer and eleven men at Aktash.” He also pointed out the extraordinary distance and daunting terrain that separated Qing forts in Kashgaria and the land the Qing claimed in the Pamirs.¹⁴⁶ What is clear is that the Afghan and Qing governments had agreed to divide the Pamirs and each side had a military presence, albeit minor, in the Pamirs. Afghan and Qing claims to the Pamirs were challenged with force by the Russian military. In July of 1892 Russian and Afghan military units clashed at Somatash, resulting in the death of a number of Afghans. While the engagement was minor, involving roughly forty troops on both sides, the outcome was significant and marked the effective end of Afghan administration of the section of the Pamirs once claimed by the shahs of Shughnan.

Russian encroachment in the Pamirs resulted in an escalation of tensions among imperial powers, as both the Qing and British fortified their positions in the region. In 1892 Charles Adolphus Murray estimated Qing troop levels within the vicinity of Tashkurgan at less than 150, including both Qing regulars and Kirghiz auxiliaries.¹⁴⁷ When George Macartney made an estimate of Qing forces in the region in May 1893 the number had inflated to “not less than 1,800 troops” stationed in Sarikol.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, in 1892 the British took advantage of the death

¹⁴⁵ Fayz Muhammad. Vol. III. Found on page 785 in original 1931 publication.

of the long-ruling Mehtar of Chitral, Aman ul-Mulk, to expand their territorial holdings in the region. The Mehtar's death ignited a fratricidal conflict within the Chitrali ruling house and Nizam ul-Mulk became the new Mehtar through a British backed coup.¹⁴⁹ The new British protectorate at Chitral would become a base for the Indian government to gather intelligence on both Russian movements in the Pamirs and Afghan activities in Badakhshan.

With Russian troops encroaching on the Upper Amu Darya and the British entrenched at Chitral, the potential for conflict appeared to be growing. These fears prompted London and St. Petersburg to find a solution to peacefully divide the region. The 1873 Granville-Gorchakov Agreement served as the basis for negotiations and there was a consensus that the Amu Darya was the common border of Russia and Afghanistan; the divide in opinion was over the tributaries of the Amu Darya and where the river began. Russian diplomats opened separate negotiations with both representatives of the Qing and the British, and London kept their Qing counterparts abreast of their negotiations with St. Petersburg. The importance of the negotiations was evinced by the extensive involvement of the Russian Foreign Minister Nicholas de Giers; British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Earl of Rosebery; and the Zongli Yamen, the Qing ministry responsible for foreign affairs.¹⁵⁰

65/1466. pp. 272-273.

¹⁴⁹ Leitner, "Appendix II: Notes on Recent Events in Chilas and Chitral"; "Extract from Letter from Government of India to Secretary of State for India, No. 233, Dated December 28, 1892." in *Correspondence Relating to Chitral*. Great Britain. India Office. London, 1895. Parliamentary

In 1893 Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, was sent to Kabul to negotiate with the Emir for a final settlement of the Afghan-Russian border in the Upper Amu Darya.¹⁵¹ A set of agreements was finalized in November 1893 that bound the Emir to cede territory on the right bank of the Amu Darya to Russia in exchange for the Russian controlled left bank of Darwaz, located further downstream to the northwest of Shughnan. The Emir also agreed not to interfere in neighboring Indian territory, including Chitral, and in return the Indian government raised his annual subsidy from twelve to eighteen lakhs¹⁵² of rupees. The Indian government also reasserted past assurances that it would aid the Emir in defense of foreign invasion, including “any territory which may come into your possession in consequence of the agreement ... in the matter of the Oxus frontier.”¹⁵³ One of the fundamental goals of the British negotiations was the extension of Afghan territory eastward until it reached a common border with Qing territory. This would not only create a buffer zone dividing the Russian Pamirs and British controlled Chitral, but it would also prevent Russian troops from occupying strategic passes on the Hindu Kush that could be used to invade British India. The proposed British border began at Lake Zorkul, which was exclusively called Lake Victoria during negotiations, and continued west as the Pamir River merged with the Panj River. The Earl of Rosebery wrote to

transferred to Russia to take part in the negotiations for a border settlement in the Pamirs. As a trusted Qing official Kreyer was assigned as the lead editor, under the name *Guianqianxun* (歸安錢恂), of an official record of the negotiations. See: Tokio Takata “Jinkaili zhuanlue.” *Riben Dongfang Xue*. (Beijing) No. 1. August, 2007. pp.260-276. Available at: Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University. <<http://www.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~takata/Kreyer.pdf>> (accessed January 2, 2012).

the Viceroy of India in June 1893 that the Russians would probably “agree to an arrangement by which respective spheres of influence of Russia and Great Britain, west of Lake Victoria, would be divided by [the] Oxus according to [the] literal interpretation of agreement of 1873.”

Rosebery added that the Afghan-Russian border should be demarcated “by a line running eastwards along the parallel of the Lake towards Aktash till it reaches frontier of China.”¹⁵⁴ The proposed border would divide the Great Pamir and leave the Little Pamir entirely outside of the Russian sphere of influence, thus creating a dilemma over which country would annex this portion of the Pamirs, as it was “neither held as Wakhan by [the] Amir, nor claimed by China.”¹⁵⁵

One option was to assign to the Qing the southern half of the Great Pamir and the Little Pamir, which were often simply referred to as an appendage of Wakhan. In a June 1893 dispatch from the Russian capital, a British official, who was in correspondence with Qing representatives assigned to St. Petersburg, stated that “the Chinese Minister showed exceptional curiosity as to what was to be the future fate of Wakhan so far as it was not considered to be Affghan [sic] territory.” The Qing official inquired as to “whose territory was it and what had we settled” and “were we going to let the Russians have the Little Pamir?”¹⁵⁶ According to British sources, Qing officials in Xinjiang expressed reservations about expanding westward. In April 1893 George Macartney noted that even if a settlement was brokered involving China, Russia and Great Britain, “China might abandon her claims even to a still greater tract of country for the sake of fairness in the partition.” Macartney added that among the concessions the Qing may have been

willing to make was “the Small Pamir should be conceded to us.”¹⁵⁷ A month later Macartney sent his superiors a copy of a map of the territory Qing officials had indicated they would consider “abandoning” in a negotiated border settlement. Macartney noted that the valley from Bozai Gumbaz to Wakhjir Pass, territory located in the Little Pamir, “is left outside Chinese limits.”¹⁵⁸ The weak position of the Qing was a doubled-edged sword and there was concern among British officials that the Qing made cede not only their claims in the Pamirs, but also Sarikol and the Taghdumbash if confronted by the Russians. In March 1893 Macartney reported that the Russian Consul at Kashgar had inquired about Sarikol’s relationship with the Qing, in particular the notion that “before Yakub Beg took possession of it, Sarikul was independent.” Macartney also speculated that recent comments by the Russian Consul at Kashgar showed that “either the Russian Government have some idea of annexing Sarikul, or that the [Russian Consul in Kashgar] is pushing them to take that step.”¹⁵⁹

The Qing continued to be active in negotiations over the Pamirs until the outbreak of war with Japan in August 1894. The Japanese inflicted a humiliating and unexpected defeat of Qing forces in Manchuria and the Yellow Sea and in April 1895 the Qing were forced to cede Korea, Taiwan, and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan. The Pamirs paled in importance to the territory the Qing had just lost to the Japanese and in August 1895 George Macartney noted that following the ignominious defeat the “Pamir question sank for China into insignificance before the

¹⁵⁷ “No. 80 D.-O., Dated Kashgar, the 13th April 1893. From George Macartney, Esq., Special

mightier one of a struggle with Japan.”¹⁶⁰ The sudden change in fortunes for the Qing was so alarming for the British that there was a concern the Qing may even cede rights to the Taghdumbash Pamir to the Russians. In August 1895 the office of the Secretary of State issued a dispatch that stated the British governments considered the “Taghdumbash Pamir is subject to the concurrent rights of China and Kanjut [or Hunza],” the latter now a British protectorate that could be used to make claims on the Taghdumbash. The dispatch cautioned that “we do not propose to make any claim” to the Taghdumbash, “except for the purpose of precaution against China ceding it to Russia.”¹⁶¹

Even before the Qing withdrew from the negotiations, there was a growing consensus among British officials that the best option was to hand control of the Great Pamir and Little Pamir to Afghanistan. The greatest obstacle to this was that the Emir of Afghanistan expressed no desire to take on responsibility for this slice of the Pamirs, a point internally conceded by British officials. The Emir held a particular aversion to a territorial swap that would force him to trade the right bank of the Amu Darya for the Little Pamir and Great Pamir. A June 1893 dispatch from the office of the Viceroy of India acknowledged that “according to letters of 1873 Agreement such a decision would deprive Amir of large extent of territory now occupied by him” and the Emir would be left in “possession of a narrow and useless strip of Wakhan which it would not be worth his while to hold.” The letter even went so far as to propose that British negotiators should claim “Shighnan was not given to Russia by the Agreement of 1873 but remained a ‘no-man’s land’ which was subsequently occupied and is now effectually held by the

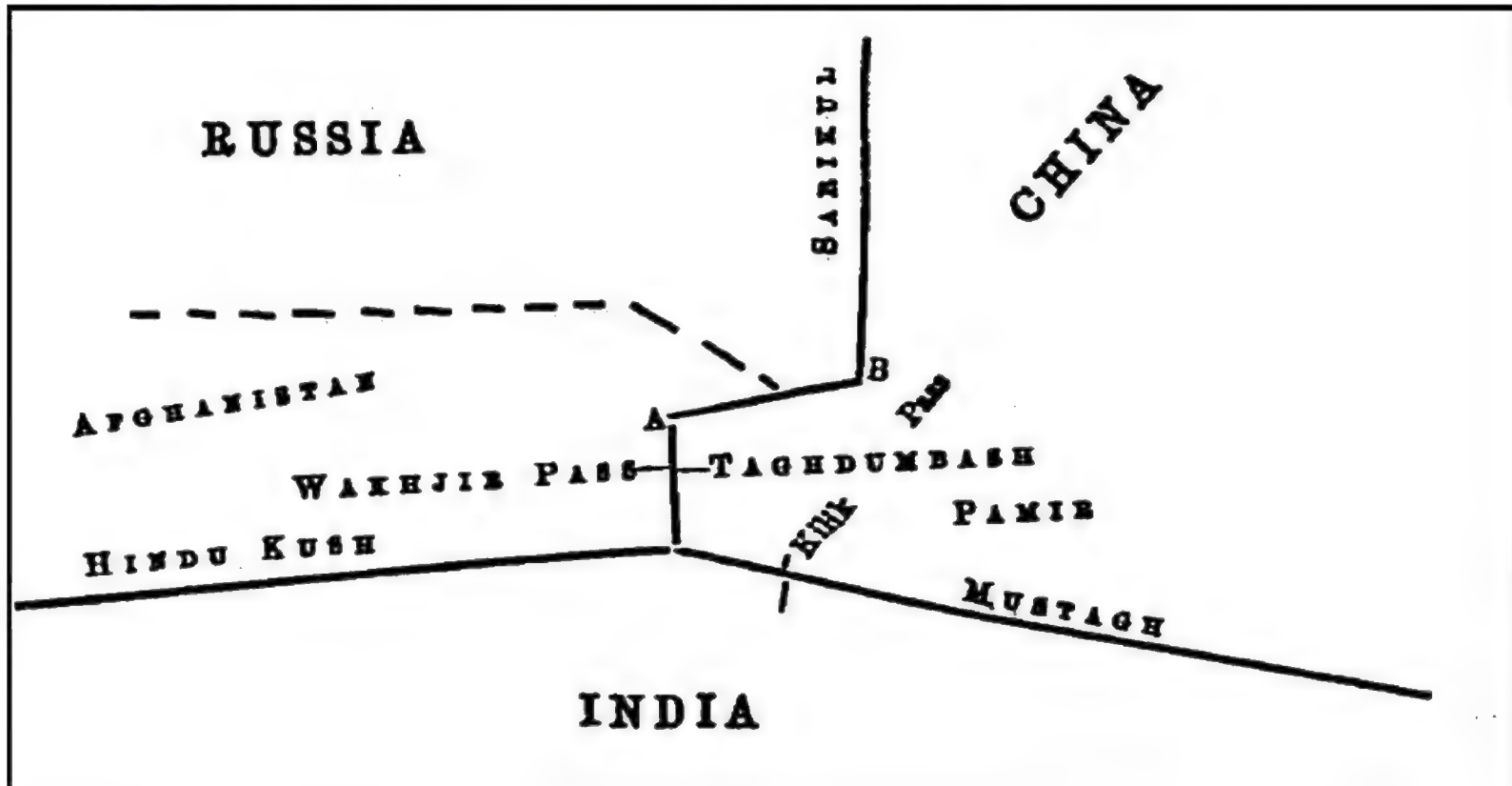
Amir.”¹⁶² The Emir’s reluctance to lay claim to the pamirs was reflected in the fact that the Great Pamir and Little Pamir offered no military advantage to Afghanistan in a conflict with Russia and would instead drain resources needed elsewhere. This was reflected in an April 1893 report by Macartney about a Kirghiz resident in Afghanistan who claimed that since 1890 the Amir of Afghanistan had been preoccupied with his anti-Hazara campaign in central Afghanistan and thus he was “so engaged that the Russians were occupying their present position on the Pamirs, for otherwise the Amir would have driven them out long ago.”¹⁶³ In contrast Shughnan and Wakhan were gateways into Afghanistan and ceding the right bank of these territories to Russia in exchange for the Great Pamir and Little Pamir only weakened the country’s defenses. Rather than abandon his positions in the Upper Amu Darya, the Emir was buttressing his control over the region. Afghan forces in all of Shughnan and Wakhan numbered roughly 800 troops in May of 1893¹⁶⁴, but only two months later British intelligence noted the Emir had 1,000 troops in Shughnan alone.¹⁶⁵

British officials were so alarmed over the Emir’s hesitations to occupy the Great Pamir and Little Pamir that they feared he would also abandon his claims to eastern Wakhan, leaving this territory open to occupation by the Russians and thus providing St. Petersburg with a military outpost directly on the border of Chitral, a British protectorate. In 1892 the Emir informed British officials that he planned on withdrawing Afghan troops stationed in eastern

¹⁶² “Viceroy to Secretary of State 30 June 1893.” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1466. pp. 7-8.

Wakhan “on the ground of inexpediency of having small detached parties of troops in isolated positions.” Exasperated British officials cautioned their superiors in the summer of 1893 that the fifty Afghan troops garrisoned at Sarhad, the eastern most outpost in the Wakhan, could be withdrawn.¹⁶⁶ The frustrations of British officials was so great that the British agent at Gilgit, Algernon Durand, brother of the Foreign Secretary of India, proposed installing Ali Mardan, the deposed Mir of Wakhan, in a newly established British protectorate named “Sad-i-Sarhad,” a territory that would include the Great and Little Pamirs. Durand boasted that Ali Mardan, who in 1893 was receiving a subsidy of 1,200 rupees per annum from the British Government, was as “a harmless, timorous, and quiet person” who “would of course be completely subservient” to British interests. As Mir of Sad-i-Sarhad, Ali Mardan would have “the means of raising the small amount of grain necessary for himself and his followers.” Durand felt that the benefits of installing Ali Mardan as “a ruler tributary to us” were “so obvious that they hardly require pointing out.” He also conceded that the plan had one great flaw – that the Emir of Afghanistan “might object to this refugee prince being reinstated in a portion of his last dominions.”¹⁶⁷ In July 1893 a dispatch from the Viceroy of India repeated this proposal and suggested that the “territory between [the] Hindu Kush and [the] meridian of Lake Victoria might, perhaps, be handed over to [the] Mir of Wakhan,” who could then be supervised by officials in the Gilgit agency. The author noted that the Emir had “never had posts to [the] east of Sarhad, and his control over the eastern end of Wakhan has never been effectual.”¹⁶⁸

1.2 1895 Map Attached to Thomas Holdich Report



Copy of map submitted with Holdich's September 1895 report. This map demonstrates the strategic importance of the border delineation and the perceptions of the British and Russians of a division of powers. Note map is devoid of any reference to the native communities divided by the borders. In addition, Afghanistan is written in a smaller font, an indication of the status of the Afghan government in the eyes of British authorities. Source: "No. 260, Dated Camp Urta Bel, the 14th September 1895. From Colonel T. H. Holdich, C.B., C.I.E., R.E., in Charge Pamir Boundary Commission. To the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department." PCA. PRO/FO 65/1507. pp. 301-302.

Afghanistan to the Chinese frontier might be favourably entertained” by St. Petersburg.¹⁶⁹ And in a July 1893 dispatch to the Viceroy of India, it was advised “that the time has come to prepare the Emir for the inevitable evacuation of Shighnan and Roshan.”¹⁷⁰ Finally in June 1894 the Emir reaffirmed that he would withdraw his forces from the right bank of the Upper Amu Darya,¹⁷¹ although he bristled at the prospect of annexing the Little Pamir and southern portion of the Great Pamir, an area he described as “waste and unfit for habitation.”¹⁷²

In March 1895 the Viceroy of India informed the Emir in writing that London and St. Petersburg had finalized an agreement to divide the Pamirs.¹⁷³ Though the Emir had claimed the previous year that the evacuation of Afghan forces had been completed, British officials internally conceded that there was “some reason to doubt whether the Afghan withdrawal from [the] trans-Oxus is as complete as the Emir appears to believe.” They also lent credibility to Russian claims of “the flight, to Russian territory of certain inhabitants of the Ghund valley [on the right bank of the Panj River] in Shighnan, who alleged that they had been pillaged by Afghan officials.”¹⁷⁴ In April 1895 Macartney passed on informants’ claims of “complaints being made by the people of Shighnan against the Afghans” and he noted that “they had asked for aid from



¹⁶⁹ “No. 22. Department. No. 1. The Earl of Roseberry to Sir R. Morier. No. 178. Foreign Office, June 14, 1893.” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1468. pp. 82-83.

¹⁷⁰ “Draft Telegram to Viceroy.” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1466. p. 130

¹⁷¹ “Memorandum of Information Received during the Month of May 1895, Regarding Affairs beyond the North-West Frontier of India.” Simla: Foreign, Department, 1895.” *PCA*. PRO/FO

the Russians.”¹⁷⁵ That same month a native agent reported that “there were at Murghabi 30 refugees from Shakhdarah and Shughnan who had come there for protection against Afghan oppression” and that “petitions had also been received from Rushan” requesting Russian aid after “40 Afghans had come to levy revenue” and killed two Rushanis.¹⁷⁶ In correspondence with the British, the Emir dismissed these reports, admitting only that in Shughnan “three mischievous Akasakals” from Shakhdarah, Darmarekht, and Ghund had had their houses burnt and crops destroyed by Afghan troops. The Emir claimed remaining inhabitants of Shughnan were in a state of “quiet and comfort and in their own homes.”¹⁷⁷ By July 1895 the British had received reports that a Russian officer accompanied by two hundred Russian soldiers and “one hundred Shighnis armed with breech-loaders, under command of a Gharani named Yusuf” marched from Murghab to Shughnan.¹⁷⁸ Two Russians and “a local Shighni headman and a headman of Gharan” then traveled to Gharan, where “they fired a few shots in token of joy.” From there they proceeded to Ran, opposite Afghan Ishkashim, and continued on to a site in the Khandud region of Wakhan named Yamchun, the site of a defunct ruby mine.¹⁷⁹

The Emir’s actions appear to have been strategic delays to provide more time to strip the

¹⁷⁵ “Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashmir, Chitral, Gilgit, Pamirs and North-West Frontier. Summary of Diary for June 1895. Intelligence Branch, Q.M.G.’s Department. Government of India. ” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1506. pp. 185-187.

¹⁷⁶ “Memorandum of Information Received during the Month of June 1895, Regarding Affairs beyond the North-West Frontier of India.” Simla: Foreign Department, 1895. *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1506. pp. 89-96.

¹⁷⁷ “Translation of a Letter from His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, to the Address of His Excellency the Viceroy, dated the 10th of Muharram 1313 H., corresponding

land of resources and negotiate a higher stipend from the British for administering the newly acquired territory. One of the last areas that Afghan forces abandoned to the Russians were the ruby mines of Gharan, which as late as July 1895 were reported to be guarded by two-hundred troops under a brigadier-general. In the summer of 1895 at Wakhan grain stores totaling 6,000 *maunds*, or more than 475,000 pounds in weight, had been reportedly collected and shipped to Gharan, Ishkashim, and Zebak.^{180 181} This incredible burden on the Wakhi was in preparation for an anticipated military offensive in Kafiristan to the south. Supplies and 600 troops were also being mustered at Munjan, a region of scarce resources.¹⁸² At the same time the Emir was demanding a sizable stipend from the British for the administration of the Little Pamir and Great Pamir. In letters to British officials the Emir insisted that “400 sowars and 1,000 khassadars will be necessary” to defend the Afghan Pamirs and “the cost will be great” to maintain these forces.¹⁸³ The Viceroy of India was aware that the Emir’s demand for funding for 1,400 troops was simply a negotiating ploy and he reminded the Emir that the agreement with Russia stipulated “that no military posts or forts shall be established” in the Afghan Pamirs and therefore the Afghan government “is relieved of the responsibility for maintaining a garrison in and taking steps for the protection of an awkwardly situated strip of territory.” He also informed the Emir that in exchange for the appointment of “an Afghan Governor to hold the strip of Eastern Wakhan” and the employment of “a small number of Khassadars and other officials” to

¹⁸⁰ “No. 2924, Dated Gulmarg, the 11th July 1895. From H.S. Barnes, Esq., C.S. Resident in Kashmir. To the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1506. pp. 192-193.

administer it, the government of India was willing to “pay a reasonable sum annually to enable you to meet the salary” of needed personnel.¹⁸⁴

In June 1895 the Viceroy requested that the Emir appoint an agent to accompany a joint commission of British and Russian officers tasked with delineating the Russo-Afghan border, beginning at Lake Zorkul and proceeding “in an easterly direction so as to meet the Chinese frontier.”¹⁸⁵ While British officers were allowed to “consult the Afghan Agent freely,” the delimitation of the border was to “be executed by the British and Russian Commissioners only.”¹⁸⁶ This only served to further stoke the indignation of the Emir. When British authorities complained that the Afghan agent arrived in the Pamirs without the Emir’s letter of authority, the Emir rebutted that “the said territory is beyond the frontier of my country, and the distance to the Chinese frontier is very great.” He added that a letter of authority would be issued if “the British Government makes a regular annual payment to the Afghan Government on account of the charges for the administration of whatever tracts of country” in the Pamirs that was being thrust upon him.¹⁸⁷

Despite the negotiating ploys of the Emir, the joint commission began delineating the Afghan-Russian border at the east end of Lake Zorkul in July 1895. The British team was led by Major-General Montagu G. Gerard. His diary described the Great Pamir and Little Pamir as

¹⁸⁴ “Translation of a Letter from His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies to the Address of His Excellency the Viceroy, Dated the 15th of Shawal 1312 II.” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1506. pp. 55-57.

virtually devoid of inhabitants. While there were signs of previous Kirghiz habitation, the commission only came across abandoned structures, such as at Langar in Wakhan where on July 19th Gerard encountered “a sort of half house, half fort here which with 5 or 6 mud huts below are burned down, *they say*, by the Chinese 5 or 6 years since who carried off the Kirghiz to the Yarkand district.” The next day at Bozai Gumbaz in the Little Pamir Gerard commented that “since Sarhad we have not seen a trace of human being, nor a domestic animal.”¹⁸⁸ Two weeks later, while camped south of Bendersky Pass he reported that “I have seen up to here from Sarhad, 60 to 70 miles, only two Kirghiz families, perhaps 12 to 15 souls.”¹⁸⁹ Gerard was informed by his travel companions that the missing Kirghiz were “afraid of becoming Afghan ... subjects” and had migrated east to Sarikol. In contrast he noted that “the Russians seem to me very popular with the Kirghiz and ... pay liberally for supplies.”¹⁹⁰

The original agreement with the Russians called for the Russo-Afghan border to be delineated according to the meridian line of Lake Zorkul until it reached the Chinese border, but when the commission surveyed the land they discovered the impracticality of such a border. Gerard agreed with Russian assertions that “such a line is a physically impossible one, as it would cut spurs, valleys, and grazing grounds belonging to the Kizil Robat Kirghiz” and the Afghans would be unable to access the northern valleys “without crossing Russian territory.” He added that “it would be impossible to properly mark such a line or maintain sufficient patrols to

watch it,” which could result in border incidents.¹⁹¹ At Gerard’s urging the British government accepted an alternate delimitation of the border that gave Afghanistan the southern portion of the Great Pamir west of the Lake Zorkul and the entirety of the Little Pamir, but excluded some grazing lands east of Lake Zorkul and south of Kizil Robat. The new border ran immediately south of the eastern end of Lake Zorkul and then turned back southwest until it reached the Wakhan Mountain range, which divides the Great Pamir and Little Pamir. The British delegation agreed to name this range the Nicholas Range in honor of the Russian Czar in exchange for the Russians agreeing to use the name Lake Victoria in place of Lake Zorkul on their maps.¹⁹² The border then followed mountain chains northeast to the Bendersky Pass, where it then continued east, until it cut south and intersected at the Chinese border at Peak Povalo Shveikovski. In September the Russo-Afghan border delineation was completed and the joint border commission was dismissed. The Emir did not officially accept the British-brokered border agreement until March 1 1897. In exchange the British granted him an increase of 50,000 rupees in his annual stipend, bringing his total subsidy from the British Indian government to eighteen and a half lakh of *rupees*.¹⁹³ The British Indian government continued to pay the Emir of Afghanistan a stipend for administrative expenses Wakhan until the death of Emir Habibullah Khan, Abdur Rahman Khan’s son and successor, in 1919 and the outbreak of the Third Anglo-Afghan War.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ “Enclosure No. 9. No. 210, Dated Camp 7 Miles S. W. Kizil Robat, the 16th August 1895 (Confidential). From Major-General M. G. Gerard, C. B. To the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.” *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1507. pp. 112-13.

E. Aftermath of the 1895 Agreement

Following the disbanding of the border commission the Emir of Afghanistan sought to consolidate his control over the left-bank of the Amu Darya; this included punishing those whom he thought had betrayed his government. In the summer of 1895 the British had relied on Ismaili informants from Afghan and Russian territory to gather intelligence. Many of these individuals were recruited by Shahzada Lais, the influential Zebaki exile in Chitral. The Ismaili informants were often communal leaders and they used their access to the British to plead for assistance and complain of maltreatment inflicted by Afghan officials. In July 1895 Shahzada Lais escorted Muhammad Zakir, a resident of Bashor in Shughnan, to Chitral. There Muhammad Zakir told British officials that “the people of Shighnan are very pleased with the Russians who treat them kindly and do not injure their property or crops.”¹⁹⁵ In May a Wakhi from Sad Ushtragh named Arbal notified British authorities that the Wakhi “complained of Afghan oppressions” and implored Shahzada Lais “to help them in getting rid of Afghan rule.” The Wakhis also sent a letter to British officers in Chitral congratulating them “on their arrival with a British force in Chitral and declared that the news had made them happy.” British authorities had no interest in inciting a revolt and they advised that “the best service which the Wakhis could do to the British Government at present would be to obey the Amir.”¹⁹⁶ Other Wakhi informants included Mullah Ashur, a *naib* from Kazi Deh in Wakhan,¹⁹⁷ and a Wakhi named Zareen who had been “sent by the Wakhan headmen towards the Pamiri Murghabi,” located on the right-bank of the Amu-Darya in Russian territory, to collect intelligence on Russian troops deployed there.¹⁹⁸ Many

Ishkashim and Munjan. Examples include Kalandar, a Said from Dashti Khan in Zebak;¹⁹⁹ Khalifa Said Hasan from Sokomol, on the border of Zebak close to Ishkashim; Sangi Muhammad, an *arbab* from Khul Kan in Zebak;²⁰⁰ Shah Zaman, a nephew of Aqsaqal Leli in Munjan,²⁰¹ and a cousin of Shahzada Lais, who traveled to Chitral with Said Shah Partavi and Mughli Said of Zebak.²⁰²

In the fall of 1895 the Emir of Afghanistan unleashed his wrath on the Ismailis of the Upper Amu Darya. British officials at Gilgit received reports from Wakhi elite complaining that “the Afghan Governor at Kala Panjah oppressed and worried them.” They also received word that Afghan authorities in Badakhshan had imposed a new provincial tax of “1 kran or 6 annas per head on cows and donkeys.” This contrasted with policy across the border, where Russian authorities exempted newly acquired territories from taxes for twelve years. Moreover, the Afghan government continued to suffer defections by local officials. Among the defectors was Darab Shah, a “Badakhshani Prince” and the governor of Shughnan, who along with fifteen followers crossed into Russian territory, where the Russians reportedly “rewarded him and have been treating him well.” In the midst of this turmoil the Emir took revenge on those who had “sent letters to British officers in Chitral” and ordered they “should be arrested and sent in chains to Kabul.” Shahzada Lais reported that fifteen men from Zebak, Ishkashim, and Wakhan who had “represented their grievances to the British officer in Chitral” had been seized and sent to Kabul. Shahzada Lais proclaimed that “the rest of the people are in great fear” and there was

widespread “hope the English will help them and release them from Afghan oppression.” He warned that if “the English will not hear their cries” the Ismailis will have no choice “but to go over to the Russians, as they can bear Afghan tyranny no longer.” These sentiments were echoed by Panj Shambe from Zebak who stated that one-hundred inhabitants of the land from Zebak to Warduj had been imprisoned in Kabul for “disloyalty to the Emir’s Government.” Sixty other Zebakis were in hiding, while twenty individuals from Zebak and Ishkashim had “fled to Russian territory.” Panj Shambe claimed that “the people of Ishkashim, Warduj, Zardes [Zardew], Sarghalan [Sarghilan], and Wakhan are hoping that the English will take over their country”, otherwise they would “go over to the Russians as they hate the Afghans.”²⁰³

One group of Ismailis that benefited from the border delineation border agreement was the Shughni prisoners held in Kabul, who had been incarcerated as early as the overthrow of Shah Yusuf Ali Khan in 1883. These prisoners were freed in July 1895 “owing to their having now become Russian subjects”²⁰⁴ and allowed to resettle in Russian-controlled Shughnan. Among those freed were slaves of the Emir and “a prince of the old reigning family of Shighnan.”²⁰⁵ After the partition of Wakhan, ex-Wakhi Mir Ali Mardan permanently settled in Chitral. In 1896 the British appointed the exiled-Wakhi Mir governor of Ishkoman, where he was permitted to collect tribute from fellow Wakhi settlers,²⁰⁶ who numbered 625 in a 1906 census.²⁰⁷ This was in spite of the fact that only the year before in July 1895 Ali Mardan had reportedly

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ “No. 3126, Dated Gulmarg, the 19th July 1895. *PCA*. PRO/FO 65/1506. pp. 210-211.

sent sheep and cattle to a Russian officer at Murghab with the intent of defecting.²⁰⁸

The last few years of the century also saw continued cross border migration of the Kirghiz of the Pamirs. According to Thomas H. Holdich, a member of the 1895 Anglo-Russian border delineation commission, the Kirghiz population living under the Qing on the Taghdumbash Pamir “could not possibly have amounted to more than a few hundred.” He also noted that the Kirghiz were inclined towards “accepting Chinese domination” due to the “easy terms on which they are permitted to live within Chinese territory, and the absence of direct taxation,” except for the “the skins of certain wild animals” that Kirghiz gave in tribute to Qing magistrates.²⁰⁹ Despite seemingly amiable relations, most Kirghiz by the end of the century had departed from Qing territory. When British agent Ralf Patterson Cobbold visited the Taghdumbash in 1898, he met Kasim Beg, but when Cobbold return a year later he found that the Kirghiz beg had had a disagreement with the *amban* at Tashkurgan and “seventy Akois [yurts] and their Kirghiz owners” migrated to the western Pamirs. Half of the Kirghiz followed Kasim Beg to Aktash in the Russian Pamirs, while the remainder settled in the Afghan Pamirs at Bozai-Gumbaz. Cobbold was informed that the Kirghiz exodus was due to an attempt by local Qing officials to force Kasim Beg’s followers to settle at Tashkurgan.²¹⁰ When Cobbold crossed into Afghan territory, he met “a good many of the inhabitants of the Taghdumbash at Bozai Gumbaz” in the Afghan Pamirs. The Kirghiz were reportedly satisfied with Afghan rule, “as the Afghans did not compel them to supply wood and cut grass for them as the Chinese Amban at Tashkurgan

had done.”²¹¹

Chapter III

The Upper Amu Darya and Afghan Pamirs in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century the land that Emir Abdur Rahman dismissed as “waste and unfit for habitation” became an important asset for the Afghan government. The Upper Amu Darya and the Afghan Pamirs served as a corridor linking Afghanistan with markets in East Turkestan and China proper. The value of the region is evidenced by the 1922 survey of Badakhshan Province led by Afghan Defense Minister Nadir Shah. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, Afghan control over the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs was tested by internal and external threats. Another round of Ismaili rebellion occurred in Shughnan in 1925 with the aid of Soviet agents. In the 1930s and 1940s Soviet forces employed lethal military force to police the border and raid Kirghiz communities in the Afghan Pamirs. This was coupled with Chinese designs to challenge Afghan ownership of the Great Pamir and Little Pamir.

In 1922 Afghan Emir Amanullah undertook steps to consolidate his control over northeastern Afghanistan. The Emir ordered Defense Minister Nadir Shah, who in 1929 would himself become Emir, to conduct a survey of Qataghan and Badakhshan Province. Nadir Shah’s survey produced a wealth of information about Qataghan and Badakhshan. The results were

hakumat-i-kalan, of Qataghan and Badakhshan; these were further subdivided into *hakumahat*. *Hakumat* were classified into first, second, and third class according to their size and importance.²¹² The *Rahnama-yi Qataghan va Badakhshan* categorized Wakhan and the Pamirs as a *hukamat-i daraje dovom* (حکومت درجه دوم), or second level district, as was Shughnan, which was also a sub-district of Wakhan and the Pamirs. Zebak was a first level district and contained the sub-districts of Gharan and Ishkashim.²¹³

Nadir Shah's survey found that the population of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs had been largely disarmed. Only three decades before the Ismailis had been in rebellion against Kabul, but according to the survey the only weapons found in the districts of Shughnan, Zebak, and Munjan were swords and an average of 30 to 40 matchlocks for hunting.²¹⁴ The survey also provided evidence of the Pashtunization of local administrative positions across the Upper Amu Darya and Afghan Pamirs, particularly among the Ismailis. Since the late nineteenth century, local Ismaili elite had been largely replaced in administrative positions by Pashtuns and Qizilbash. Local elites at the village level retained certain responsibilities, including collecting taxes and recruiting soldiers, and administrators appointed by Kabul depended on native local elite to a certain degree.²¹⁵ In Zebak all of the *hakimon*,²¹⁶ or local governors, listed beginning in the reign of Afghan Emir Abdur Rahman were non-Zebakis, including a Turk from Badakhshan,

²¹² Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah. *Modern Afghanistan*. London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd. 1938. pp. 255-256, 261; Ashraf Ghani. "Koshkaki, Mawlawi Borhan al-Din Khan. Qataghan et Badakhshan. Description du Pays d'après l'Inspection d'un Ministre Afghan en 1922 by Marguerite Reut." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. Vol. 105. No. 1. January – March,

an Uzbek from Sar-e Pol, and individuals from Chandawal, Kabul Kandahar, Maidan, and Paghman – as well as members of the Pashtun Mohammadzai and Mozafari tribes. The longest a governor of Zebak served was five years, and the last six governors served six months or less. Eleven *hakimon* are listed as serving in Wakhan and the Pamirs following the ouster of Ali Mardan. Five *hakimon* were of Badakhshani origin, while several individuals were from Maidan, Istalif, Logar, and Panjsher.²¹⁷

Dissatisfaction with officials appointed by Kabul was likely a factor in what has been called “the Shighnan rebellion of 1925.”²¹⁸ Unrest began in April 1925 when Shughnis arrested the local hakim and lay siege to the government-held fort at Barpanjah. When Afghan military reinforcements arrived, 8,000 Shughni crossed the border into Soviet territory. Several dozen Shughnan communal leaders, including *aqsaqals*, *arbabs* and religious figures, signed a petition clamoring for “Soviet protection” and Soviet citizenship, as well as arms to fight the Afghan military. But by May Soviet and Afghan officials had brokered an agreement to pardon the rebels and encouraged the return of all refugees to their homes in Afghanistan. Within a week more than 6,000 refugees had returned to Shughnan district in Badakhshan, Afghanistan. In the fall of 1925, most of the officials in Shughnan were replaced by loyal Pashtuns and a detachment of Afghan troops was sent to hunt down the holdout leader of the Shughnan rebels.²¹⁹ The Shughni rebellion marked the last Ismaili rebellion against Kabul in the Upper Amu Darya until the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

While the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs were a potential strategic liability for Kabul, trade possibilities with East Turkestan and China through the Wakhan corridor offset some of the drawbacks of administering this remote territory. In the 1920s the product that sparked a dramatic rise in trade between Afghanistan and China was opium. The roots of the boom in the export of Afghan opium can be traced back to the 1907 Anglo-Qing agreement that called for the gradual reduction in opium exports from the British subcontinent to China. The conversion of the British Raj from a primary exporter of opium to an anti-opiate crusader opened the Chinese market to alternative cultivators of poppy. This was coupled with the political instability that ensued following the 1911 Xinhai Revolution in China that replaced Manchu rule with a politically fragile Chinese state. Poppy cultivators in Russian Central Asia became one of the chief exporters of opium to markets in Xinjiang, but this came to an end following the advent of Bolshevik power in Russian Central Asia. Russian opiates were replaced with Afghan alternatives, including opium cultivated in Badakhshan. Moreover, opium grown outside of Badakhshan was transported through Badakhshan on the way to markets in Kashgar, Yarkand and throughout Xinjiang.

The main center for opium production in Afghanistan was in central Badakhshan at Jurm, where poppy growers produced what British Consul-General at Kashgar, Percy T. Etherton, called a “superior” quality opiate.²²⁰ Trade between these markets passed through Ismaili and Kirghiz territory, creating opportunities to work as guides and transport goods. By the mid-1920s Afghanistan became one of the leading exporters of opium to China. Much of the opium was

grown in Badakhshan and the trade-route for drug smuggling passed through Wakhan and the Afghan Pamirs. Opium was sold in markets in Badakhshan at three *tolas* (1.5 oz.) for one Kabuli rupee, far below the price obtainable abroad. Drugs were then transported through the Little Pamir in Wakhan in Afghanistan or across the Great Pamir that cut through both Afghanistan and the Russian Pamirs, which were patrolled by police at Murghab. Drugs transported through Wakhan were subject to an export duty at the Wakhjir border station of five Kabuli rupees per *seer*²²¹ though this could be avoided through bribery. The importation of opium into Chinese territory was illegal and a percentage of the smuggled drugs were then given to “Kirghiz and others in Sarikol for their assistance” to transport the drugs to the main markets of Yarkand and Yengisar.²²²

The trade in goods, including opium, between China and Afghanistan via the Wakhan Corridor was “exclusively in the hands of Afghan subjects”²²³, and traders from Badakhshan dominated the opium trade.²²⁴ The 1927 arrest of an Afghan drug smuggler in Puli County in Xinjiang on the border between Afghanistan and China reveals the ease that Badakhshani traders escaped prosecution. In February 1927 an Afghan named Tashimaiti (塔什買提)²²⁵ was arrested by local Chinese officials in Puli County. When Tashimaiti was captured he was carrying two bags of opium that weighed a total of eighty-seven *jin*, or roughly eighty pounds. While en route to Kashgar, Tashimaiti escaped from his military escorts one night when he went outside to use

²²¹ One *seer* is equivalent to around 7 kilograms.

²²² “Report on the Trade of Chinese Turkistan with India and Adjacent Countries for the Year

the bathroom. An order was then issued for the opium to be publically burned.²²⁶ The opium trade had deleterious social costs, particularly for the Ismailis. In Afghanistan in Zebak and Wakhan it was common to eat and smoke opium and as many as two-hundred men and women in each district consumed opiates. The *Rahnama-yi Qaṭaghan va Badakhshan* estimated that at least three out of ten inhabitants of Shughnan were addicted to opium and Shughni were reportedly known to sell their daughters and sisters for opium.²²⁷

In the 1930s and 1940s, Afghan ownership of the Great Pamir and Little Pamir was challenged by both the governments of the Soviet Union and China. In the mid-1930s Soviet authorities in the Murghab District of Tajikistan stopped permitting Afghan Kirghiz access to pasturage in Soviet territory. The Soviets also staged the first of a number of raids into the Afghan Pamirs. During field-work among the Afghan Kirghiz in the 1970s, Nazif Shahrani recorded a number of accounts of elderly Kirghiz, including the local Khan who led the Afghan Kirghiz community, who witnessed these cross border Soviet raids. The first raid took place in 1935 at Gonju Bai near Aktash on the Afghan-Soviet border. The target of the raid was the Khan's father, then an influential herd owner who encouraged his fellow tribesmen to oppose the Soviets. He had already left for sanctuary among the Kirghiz of the Taghdumbash in Xinjiang and when the Soviets could not find him they took his sons hostage and robbed them of most of their belongings. A second raid occurred in the fall of 1941, which resulted in stolen livestock and property and the deaths of more than forty Afghan Kirghiz in the Great and Little Pamirs. Other Kirghiz were taken prisoners, including some who never returned from Soviet custody.²²⁸

A similar and perhaps related event is retold by Remy Dor and Clas Naumann. According to this account a rebellion occurred during the Second World War among the Kirghiz of the Murghab District in Tajikistan. A number of the leaders of the rebellion escaped to Afghan territory, but in the fall of 1943 the Soviets killed forty-one Kirghiz, including two Khans of the Greater Pamir.²²⁹

In 1944 Soviet machinations turned east towards Puli County in Xinjiang. In September 1944 Kumara Padmanabha Sivasankara Menon, an agent in the Indian Political Service, traveled through Puli County with the permission of the Chinese government. According to Menon, the Sarikoli herders in Puli County had a wealth of livestock, including goats, sheep and yak, and were “very well-off” in comparison to the residents in neighboring Hunza. After departing Puli County Menon heard that Soviet armed forces had crossed the border into Puli County, including “some 600 Russian Kirghiz, armed with rifles and machine-guns, [who] came via Subashi to Sarikol and carried off 10,000 sheep and 1,000 yaks.” The 200 members of the “Peace and Preservation Corps” in Tashkurgan “put up a stout fight” but were overwhelmed.²³⁰

Soviet aggression in the Pamirs and East Turkestan was part of the overall policy of expanding the Soviet Union’s influence and borders during the 1940s. At the conclusion of the Second World War and in the war’s immediate aftermath the Soviet Union employed diplomacy and military force to significantly expand its territory at the expense of Japan in the east and Eastern European neighbors in the West, as well as occupying Manchuria. It was within this

incursion occurred in 1946, the same year Kabul and Moscow finalized a border delineation treaty. Soviet authorities claimed that the raids were retaliation for cross border attacks on the part of the Afghan Kirghiz,²³¹ but in interviews with Shahrani in the 1970s the Kirghiz elders denied this and claimed the Soviet attacks were merely meant to strike fear in the Afghan Kirghiz and take their territory. The last Soviet incursion occurred in the summer of 1946 and the target was the Kirghiz Khan, Rahman Qul. The Kirghiz put up resistance against the small group of Soviet soldiers, forcing them to withdrawal back across the border. Rahman Qul and his fellow tribesmen reported the incident to apathetic Afghan authorities in Wakhan who offered no support. Rahman Qul then decided to cross the border into Xinjiang and seek sanctuary in the Taghdumbash, along with a number of relatives.²³² A hint of these events was printed in the 1946-47 edition of the official Afghan government almanac *Afghanistan Kalany*, which reported that the government of Badakhshan was investigating criminal activities in the border districts of Zebak, Shughnan, and Wakhan, though the brief text did not provide details of the supposed crimes.²³³

There is also evidence in records of the Guomindang government in China of refugees crossing from the Wakhan district in Afghanistan to Chinese territory. A December 1948 internal memorandum produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that in recent years “Afghanistan refugees from Wǎgāngjī (瓦剛雞) escaped to Xinjiang” because they “must have

thought Wǎgāngjī (瓦剛雞即) is Wǎhǎn (瓦罕) and a territory of China.”²³⁴ Meanwhile, the last Soviet raid into the Afghan Pamirs coincided with the signing in June 1946 of an Afghan-Soviet treaty that confirmed the main channel of the Amu Darya and Panj as the common boundary and created an Afghan-Soviet Border Commission to determine the “nationality of the islands in the Amuyah and Panj rivers.”²³⁵ In 1947 and 1948 the joint commission allocated the possession of 1,192 islands that lay in waterways dividing the two countries. Afghanistan and the Soviet Union signed further agreements in 1958 and 1981 reaffirming and again demarcating the boundary from Lake Zorkul to the Chinese border.²³⁶

Afghan claims to the Pamirs were also challenged by Guomindang officials working in China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following the conclusion of the Second World War, Guomindang officials began rethinking China’s territorial claims in Central Asia, including China’s historical claims to the Afghan Pamirs. The 1919 Anglo-Afghan War resulted in Kabul gaining full independence in exercising foreign relations, yet for more than two decades no exchange of ambassadors between the governments of Afghanistan and China took place. Writing in 1944 Richard Norins noted that “peculiar political problems have existed in regard to China’s diplomatic position vis-à-vis Afghanistan”, in particular the Chinese reservations “over

²³⁴ “Pamier diqu woguo huajie wenti zhi jiantao niyi yaodian.” Memorandum Written by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. December 9, 1948. *Waijiaobu Dangan Congshu: Jiewulei*. Vol. IV. Xinjiang Vol. II. Taipei: Waijiaobu Bianyin. 90th year of the Republic of China. pp. 175-76.

²³⁵ “Waijiao bu han guofang bu, neizheng bu ju zhu afuhan gongshiguan sui dian chengsong yijiusiliu nian asu hua jie xieding yuan yi yingwen chaojian ji youguan e yuan ge yi jian,

the Sino-Afghan boundary, especially questions concerning the general area of the Wakhan Pamir.”²³⁷ The *Waiguo jiandie mitan ji jiandie xianyi fenzi xiansuo mingce* reveals Guomintang officials suspected the Afghan government had spies working Xinjiang, including an Afghan Kirghiz from Wakhjir born in 1917 whom the Chinese identified as Juwubiekebiekekuli.²³⁸

In March 1944 Kabul and the Guomintang war-time government in Chongqing signed a treaty of friendship that called for an opening of commercial trade negotiations and for the first time established diplomatic relations.²³⁹ The commencement of Afghan-Soviet border negotiations ignited a debate over China’s territorial claims in the Pamirs within China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Internal Affairs. Qing era files concerning the Pamirs were destroyed during the Japanese invasion, leading to confusion among Guomintang officials over what China’s legitimate territorial claims were. Copies of the original treaties had to be obtained from the Soviet Union.²⁴⁰ Some Chinese officials rejected the 1946 Soviet-Afghan agreement and cast doubt on the legitimacy of treaties signed in the 1880s and 1890s during the height of British and Russian imperialist expansion in the Pamirs. There were even calls for a renegotiation of the border between Xinjiang, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. A March 1948 memorandum from the Ministry of Internal Affairs claimed that “in regard to the Pamirs, border affairs between China, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, and Indian still remain ‘undetermined’ (未

²³⁷ Martin R. Norins. *Gateway to Asia: Sinkiang, Frontier of the Chinese Far West*. New York: J. Day, 1944. pp. 132, 189.

²³⁸ The following source is one of a number of lists of known Guomintang officials and

定) and all eight of the pamirs should belong to our country's territory.” The memorandum went on to contest Soviet claims in the Pamirs, stating that “the extreme west of our territory should arrive at the Panj River (Pēnchihé /噴赤河), but it appears that the Soviet Union already believes that their territory includes the majority of the pamirs.” The author of the document recommended the creation of a “Four Nation Organized Committee for Mutually Surveying” (Sìguó Zǔzhī Wěiyuánhui Huitóng Kāndìng/四國組織委員會會同勘定) composed of representatives from China, the Soviet Union, India, and Afghanistan to delineate the border of the Pamirs.²⁴¹

Particular attention was focused on asserting China's claims on the Afghan district of Wakhan. A December 1948 internal memorandum produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs investigated historical Chinese claims on Wakhan. The investigation was prompted in part by the recent arrival of refugees, most likely Rahman Qul and his fellow tribesmen, who had crossed from the Afghan district of Wakhan into East Turkestan. The memorandum supported China's rights to the Wakhan by noting, incorrectly, that the Qing had never been consulted before the 1895 division of the Pamirs and even claiming that Britain had wanted to designate Wakhan as Qing territory. Despite these findings, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommend against pushing China's claims to the Wakhan due to political instability in China and the fact that Wakhan had already belonged to Afghanistan for sixty-years.²⁴²

Border disputes were soon eclipsed by the dramatically reversal in fortunes for the

Republican government in China, which in late 1949 was ousted from power by the Chinese Communist Party. Just months before East Turkestan fell to the Chinese Communists, the Kirghiz uprooted from the Taghdumbash and decided to return to Afghanistan. Shahrani noted that the Prime Minister of Afghanistan had dispatched an envoy inviting the Kirghiz to return to Afghan territory. The Kirghiz had to fight a detachment of Guomindang border guards before they reentered the Afghan Pamirs.²⁴³ According to Jean Bowie Shor, who visited the Afghan Pamirs in August and September 1949, the Kirghiz under Rahman Qul migrated from Chinese territory to the Afghan Pamirs in the summer of 1949 after they killed a local Guomindang commander and the eight soldiers serving under him. This event led to weeks of border skirmishes at the Wakhjir Pass between the Kirghiz and Chinese border guards, which resulted in the death of a number of Kirghiz and a halt of cross-border traffic.²⁴⁴ Along with the return of exiles that had fled Soviet raids earlier in the decade were individuals who had more extensive roots in East Turkestan, including a Kirghiz who had been serving in the Guomindang armed forces and one Ata Bai Qazi, a religious judge. Upon their return to Afghan territory the Kirghiz were greeted by a special representative sent by provincial authorities.



Conclusion

Over the course of a century the Ismailis and Kirghiz of the Upper Amu Darya and the Great Pamir and Little Pamir lost their political autonomy and became Afghan citizens governed by Afghan administrators. In the case of the Ismailis, the ranks of their traditional elite was decimated through military conflict with the Afghan government and their mirs and shahs were supplanted by Afghan officials. The Great Pamir and Little Pamir were devoid of sizable Kirghiz settlements at the time of the 1895 Anglo-Russian border commission that delineated Afghanistan's border with Russia. In subsequent decades Kirghiz migrated into and out of the Afghan Pamirs according to the political climate in East Turkestan and the Russian Pamirs. In the 1930s and 1940s the Soviet Union used military force to close the border to migration and even raid Kirghiz communities in Afghanistan. The victory of the Communist Party of China in East Turkestan in 1949 led to the effective closure of the Wakhjir Pass for the migration of people and goods between Afghanistan and China. The midpoint of the twentieth century marked the end of open trade and migration between the Afghan, Soviet and Chinese portions of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs.

The Afghan government's view of the Upper Amu Darya and Pamirs also evolved during the decades of Afghan occupation and integration of the region. While the Emir's obstinacy was an irritant to British negotiators, Abdur Rahman Khan's tactics of delay were one of the few opportunities the Afghan monarch had to influence bilateral negotiations between St. Petersburg

Game dominated by Russia and Britain, rather he was an active participant who had had a genuine desire to exercise authority over Afghan foreign policy and claim ownership over the lands his armed forces controlled. Despite misgivings about acquiring the Great Pamir and Little Pamir, the Afghan Pamirs became both strategic and economic assets. The corridor through the Pamirs reaped economic benefits in the 1920s with the expansion of the opium trade and concerns that administering and defending the Great Pamir and Little Pamir would become an unbearable burden were alleviated by the fact that the Russians in Central Asia and the British in India recognized Afghan ownership over this territory. Even when Chinese officials in the 1940s contemplated challenging Afghan suzerainty over the Great Pamir and Little Pamir, Beijing ultimately decided against upsetting the balance of political alignment in the Pamirs.

Today many of the borders in the region have reopened for trade and the governments of Afghanistan, China, and Tajikistan conduct amiable relations. Despite this period of relative prosperity, many barriers remain in place that curb or outright prevent cross border relations. The Kirghiz of the Pamirs in Tajikistan and China have largely abandoned their pastoral heritage and a large number of the Kirghiz of the Afghan Pamirs were forced to flee their homeland for refugee in Turkey due to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. For those Kirghiz pastoralists that remain, international borders remain a real obstacle to seasonal migration. The Ismailis on both banks of the Upper Amu Darya in Tajikistan and Afghanistan have developed strong ties to the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan Development Network has provided funding for infrastructure and education projects. In contrast, the most significant economic power in the

Pass are significant, though Chinese engineers have overcome more daunting obstacles.

Moreover, the benefits of opening such a trade route may help to alleviate the hardships of the Ismailis and Kirghiz Afghans who for much of the past century have lived behind international borders that have stifled historic and cultural ties with brethren in neighboring countries.

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